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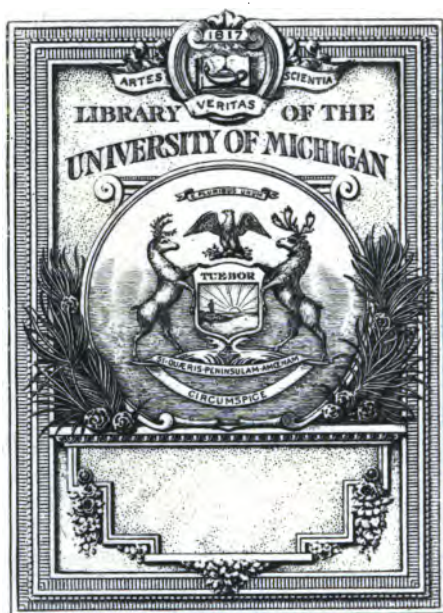
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**Snethen on lay representation;
or,
Essays on lay representation and
church government, collected
from the Wesleyan repository,
The Mutual rights, and the Mu-
tual rights & Christian intelli-
gencer, from 1820-1829 inclusive,
and now
republished in chronological
order, with an introduction,
by
the Rev. Nicholas Snethen.**

**Baltimore
J. J. Harrod
1835**

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INTRODUCTION.

1835

Smith, Nicholas

Mr. William S. Stockton issued the first number of his half monthly periodical, called **THE WESLEYAN REPOSITORY, AND RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCER**, in Trenton, New Jersey, April 12th, 1821. He invited me to become a contributor. In No. viii. July 19th, 1821, two essays on church government appeared, signed **A METHODIST**. This was the first intimation I had of his intention to admit of discussions on that subject, in his paper. In No. x. August 16th, 1821, he published my "Animadversions" on those two essays. In a third number, in No. xi. August 30th, 1821, he begins, by saying, "To the Animadversions, published in No. x. of this paper, I have no objections. Between the author and myself there is not a shadow of difference, *others have misunderstood me*. It is said, my essays lead to scism; I deprecate scism." In No. xxiii., February 14th, 1822, an essay was published "on Lay Delegation," signed **A METHODIST**. It contains a plan, as follows, "Let the Annual Conferences choose from their own order, man for man. Apportion the delegates among the districts, according to our population in each, &c." The nature and relation of constituents and delegates, are fairly stated. It is an able essay. Mr. Stockton himself wished; and as he said, others also, that I should continue to write on the subject of lay representation. A free and friendly correspondence had taken place between us, without any indications of reserve on his part. No strife ever existed between us who should be greatest. If it were consistent with my plan, which is not to interfere with any other writer, but leave all free to publish their own writings; I would have inserted in this collection, those essays, which were published before my own.—The publication of those, broke silence, and to break silence, on the subject of church government, in those days, called for no common resolution. But the credit, not of a mere beginner, is due to Mr. Stockton; his efforts in behalf of lay representation, were unwearied and knew no bounds short of necessity.

In the General Conference of May, 1820, the presiding officer question, which had been agitated for twenty years, was

favor of the nomination being in the bishops, and the election in the annual conferences;—reconsidered;—and suspended for four years. I had been known, as being among the earliest advocates for their election; and also as the mover (1812) of the amendment to leave the nomination with the bishops. In this same General Conference, the local preachers' conference was authorised. My advice was asked. It was, that, whatever the General Conference might do in regard to the local preachers, ought to be real, not nominal; that their expectations ought not to be raised, with the promise of substances, to be disappointed with shadows. I had been an advocate for the local preachers for twelve years, that is, until their ordination to elder's orders was sanctioned by the General Conference; but the fate of their conference disclosed facts enough to convince me, that as a body, they would not be apt to profit by any thing which might be gained for them. As I had become local, I ceased to have any immediate personal interest in the election of presiding elders, by the members of the annual conferences. But to preserve consistency, I gave the cause all the continued support in my power; and wrote the first essay in this collection, which was printed in the December following the General Conference, (1820) and circulated by mail confidentially among travelling preachers only. From similar considerations, I wrote the essays on church property. The placing of those essays among the charges and specifications against the editorial committee, with my own proper name as their author; and the sitting of certain judges, in the courts of appeal, upon them, is perhaps without a parallel in the history of prosecutions against the press. If I could have appeared as evidence, the blood of certain reverend judges must have been in a most uncommon degree under the control of volition, or some portion of it would have mounted to the face.

It was very evident to my mind that it would be difficult, if not impossible to disentangle the relative bearings and interests of presiding elder matters, so as to present the abstract questions of right fully and directly before the public mind. Opinions were far from being unanimous, whether the order ought to exist at all; and no less diversity of opinion existed respecting its prerogatives, and privileges. Arguments in favor of the rights of a body or order of men, whose very lawfulness, as well as expediency was doubtful, would not be likely to remove those doubts, or to conciliate conflicting opinions. But lay representation was resolvable into an abstract question of right. The principle of right must be conceded

with it, that was all. The lay delegates were not to be vested with any of the existing powers of office. Their commission was to cease with the adjournment of the body. Now the same thing may happen in an inverse order in a democracy; for though its powers cannot be checked, as those of a monarchy may; the principles may be expanded, and undergo a variety of modifications to that end, while it undergoes no change destructive of its identity. As for example; a municipality, being the most simple or elementary of its forms, it cannot be reduced lower; but in this form, it could not be reduced to practice, in a county, or state, or a union of states; for either of these purposes the principle must be expanded, not limited. If indeed, as may be inferred from the argument of certain persons, they suppose, that every change in the extreme forms of monarchy or democracy, is revolution; then I was a revolutionist. But I did not so regard the case then, nor do I now. The line of transition between the two forms of government was not approached. I had settled the belief in my own mind by what I conceived to be good authority and sound logic; that lay representation was not revolution, nor corruption, but an improvement. And to show the General Conference, the integrity of professions, the whole of the change was submitted to themselves. Thus in addition to all my previous inquiries, I had more than twelve months, as a writer, with the sole control of myself and the subject, to settle upon principle. Whenever I shall be convinced that a hierarchy cannot be checked by lay representation without revolution, in the common meaning of the term, I shall be free to acknowledge, that I was mistaken in the meaning of words.

It is important that it should be fully understood, that I choose my end, and my means to accomplish it. The end was to check the power of the hierarchy, the means was lay representation. Any number of persons might have agreed, and united, or began to write simultaneously upon this end and means, or any modification of them. But the fact in this instance, was not so. One editor sustained the press, and one correspondent labored to shape the subject, without a confidential counsellor. Circumstances did not then admit of counsel. May I not say, that I wrote what I wrote, and had my own reasons for it. I had ceased to be a believer in the popular opinion of political "luck and chance," and had become a convert to the doctrine, that the effects of social governing causes are uniform. The common opinion was, the plan works well enough now, and it will be time enough to correct the evils when they do happen, if they ever do.

No fears were entertained of consequences. Now I too, was (as they said) for letting well enough alone, wanting no remedy for well enough, but to provide one for bad enough; because none had been provided, and when it should come, the remedy would be too late. The notion, as I conceived, that a government so constructed might be reformed, has no foundation in science. A carriage, which has no break upon its wheels, when descending a hill cannot be stopped to provide one; but its motion must grow more rapid as it runs. My editor had a scanty subscription, and I was alone. This state of things could not last, and if it could, would be of no use. The end to be gained implied numbers, and these were to be found. Never was the question how? calculated to excite more solicitude. Who could solve it? Half month, after half month, were passing away, without proselytes. Other questions also, no less important, demanded the highest consideration. If you make converts by your writings, what relations will exist between them and you? Will they be your inferiors, equals or superiors? Lay representation might be discussed under either of these conditions. A choice was to be made of one among them. My choice was in favor of equals;—not only liberty, but equality. How shall it be gained? Not merely by willing it; not by accident. As an effect, it must have its own cause. The causes which may produce inferiority, or superiority, will not produce equality, or vice versa. To say to persons individually or collectively, unite with me as equals, to gain lay representation, would be of little avail. Liberty and equality are not gained in this way. Great anxiety to make converts often defeats itself, and never more frequently, than when conditions are cheapened to familiarity. I had as stated, ample leisure to study those problems; and an ample number of historical precedents. Human intentions and volitions, however pure and strong, cannot materially influence the operation of means. It is in vain, in mechanics, or in nature, to intend, or resolve, that lighter bodies shall predominate over heavier ones. I intended and resolved to be an equal. Of this I was conscious; but this intention and resolution could only influence myself. Luther, it is said, expressed his regret, that those who embraced his opinions, were called by his name. And Wesley, it seems, signified no intention, that Methodists should be called after his name. There must have been some inherent cause, operating independently of the purposes of these men, to have perpetuated their names as leaders.

The opinion is expressed in the essays (it was my opinion then) that the government had not departed from its own original, that

by referring to this distinction of the causes and effects of instruction and excitement. Religious light and knowledge do not increase in proportion to the amount of the exciting matter and manner of preaching; the sinner may hear and so it may happen, that instead of his sinning against light and knowledge, as it supposed, he may be rather sinning for the want of them, or in ignorance. Is not the difference between producing ideas in the mind by instruction; and calling or quickening them into action, indicated, in the memorable saying of our Saviour; "When the comforter is come, he will bring all things to your remembrance, which I have spoken unto you?"

It was by this mode of reasoning, that before I put pen to paper, I came to the conclusion, that the nature of the case did not require grave didactic essays, to teach or instruct the members of the church the elements of government; and also to the inference, that success in this mode of writing, must involve discipleship. And during all the years, which at longer or shorter intervals, I continued to write, equality, and not discipleship, was never wholly lost sight of, if it may have occasionally escaped my attention; the essays, I trust, will shew casuality, and not design.

My first concern was, if public attention enough could be excited, to unite a sufficient number in favor of lay representation, to cause jealousy or alarm; that they should not deserve to be expelled. The second, if they should be expelled, what they should do. Will they unite and embody themselves? How will they unite? As equals, or as unequals? If as the former, the elements of equality must exist, and have begun to operate, as far as circumstances may admit, before the crisis, for no new creation can then take place. I labored under a full conviction, that the only rational hope of success, for the party, in case of expulsion, would be in rallying, as a purely equal, or democratical, or congregational association; or in acknowledging some one, as a didasculus, or original teacher, whose yoke disciples might take upon them, in order to learn of him. Let it be supposed, that as new writers appeared from time to time, in our periodicals, I had contended for preeminence, in the manner of those, who have preeminence, in the order of time, usually do contend for it, would not one of two cases have happened? Would there not have been a strife, who should be greatest? Or would not certain persons have taken on the characters of followers to some leader? How could I have monopolized the pages of our periodicals; or have contended against those, who did write, without maintaining a claim to the mastery? And how could I claim the mastery, with-

out claiming the right? What right could I claim, but that of priority in the order of time? But if such a claim would not be admitted as valid, what valid claim could those set up, who came forward to labor in the cause at a much later period?

Behold, the fact! Of all the advocates for lay representation among Methodists, those who formed the nucleus of the Methodist Protestant Church were the most equal. How did they become so? Did any one person contribute to make them so? Or was this equality the result of simultaneous determination? Or was it an accident? Where my essays remain unknown, or my intention in writing them is unknown, must not some of the data of a correct answer to these questions be wanting? The primary cause of this equality, was in the nature and form of the excitement, which roused the attention of these persons to the subject; an excitement as has been shown productive not of new ideas, and of course requiring no discipleship to make it act. The consequence, therefore, of its first impression, or impulse, was a consciousness of equality, as well as of freedom, to those who felt it. I choose the excitement, and the manner of its application, from among many others, and in preference to teaching, in the full confidence, that those who yielded to it, would feel not a whit behind myself; feel under no obligation to obey me, nor indeed, any fear of withstanding me to my face, in case of any difference of opinion between us. When men are thus brought to speak out, and to act out, what they before knew, feelings of subordination are never generated. No action of the mind seems to them more voluntary or independent. Their feelings are apt to run away with the prompting cause, and become insensible to it. Had these essays been published in Rome or Constantinople, they would have remained a mere dead letter; they were as much so to those Methodists, who thought nothing, and were determined to think nothing about the rights of laymen. Voluntary inattention and prejudice, like ignorance, are unexcitable. But it is in the nature of all social excitement, as it is of all other kinds of excitement, to give, in a greater or less degree, its own characteristic impression to its effects or products. The consequences will follow in fact, independently on volition, or intention, or foresight. If one, under the influence of prejudice or passion, strongly excites another, a corresponding emotion or feeling will be excited, although the contrary may be intended; thus shewing how the law of cause and effect furnishes data by which human forethought may be directed. Let it be supposed, that in writing one of my early essays on lay representation, I had carelessly, or ignorantly, or intention-

ally used a word, or phrase, calculated to convey the idea that I was aspiring to the mastership of the party, can it be supposed, that in the then excited state of the public mind, the effect would not have answered to the meaning of the word or phrase, but to the intention of the writer? The history of parties does not, perhaps, exhibit an example of greater equality than reigned among us. It became a first principle; a germ of existence which assimilated all who united with it. Could we have gotten our necks from under a hierarchical yoke by any other means?

From the number of cases of Maniteism, it should seem that the tendency among religious parties, is strongly towards it. In some cases, where it has not obtained, it appears to have been prevented for a time by adventitious causes, as in the name Methodist, instead of Wesleyan. Among our contemporaries who have taken on the name of *ites* and *ans*, we have been regarded as not democratical enough. But does not a predilection for names, evince more of a morbid state of social feeling than of a genuine and healthy action of the spirit of equality? To make followers out of those who are followers of other leaders, it is not enough to win their affections, their affections must be detached from those to whom they had been previously engaged also. But this can seldom be done, without the aid of prejudice and passion. A remarkable instance of this strong personal feeling for and against old and new leaders, was familiar to all, and to none more intimately known, than to myself. I could not, ignorantly, have followed the example. And surely, the success of it was no high recommendation of it. This want of success, in previous attempts, to bring lay representation into practice among Methodist people, could not have been overlooked or disregarded by one who had the choice of his own means and time, without a criminal inattention or presumption. The first point of enquiry among the wherefores, were the possibles and impossibles. Is the thing impossible? or have the plans pursued, been wrong? or can any plan be pursued with promise of success? It did seem to me, that all personal interests and feelings, as first prompters, were almost as ominous as stumbling upon the threshold. Causes which have failed, cannot be repeated with hopes of success. And if other causes in combination with them may, it is fair to presume that they may succeed better without them than with them. Certainty, indeed, belongs not to any mortal anticipations; for, however correctly the ~~causes~~ or means in our power may be appreciated, no human foresight can look forward to all the causes which may oppose us, and counter-

vail our plans. The great, the all-absorbing point of attention, was expulsion. The equality of feeling, in all the friends of the principle, being anticipated as secured, and each individual, of course, feeling independent and responsible, separation was thus guarded against. If not ejected for representation's sake, the members of the party must remain in the church, whatever may be the fate of the party question. But will the powers that be, expel us? They may do it; the various means by which they can do it, are in their own choice; and in case of their failure, they may do it by willing it. The possibility of the event was fairly admissible. No calculation could be made without it. But as a dutiful son of the church, ought not the admission of a possibility of expulsion, to have deterred one from stirring the subject, or led me to let it alone, before it was meddled with? So I judged not. There was a day, when, after years of diligent and anxious enquiry into causes, and forethought of consequences, in the solitude of retirement, in the calmness of reason, and with no other conscious emotions than those which seemed to me to emanate from good will to all who were, or might be concerned, my purpose became fixed, and has been steadily pursued from that day to this. It may be wrong. I felt the possibility, that it might. I feel so now. But the evidences that it was right, multiply upon me. If it be possible for the men who wield the government of the Methodist Episcopal Church, to expel the petitioners, for lay representation, from her bosom, I will, in anticipation, furnish the lever, and fix its fulcrum, so as to compel them to use it, with one effect to themselves. If they have recourse to the machinery of power, it shall operate a greater effect upon the hierarchy, than upon the principle we petition for. From the day they expel the friends of lay representation, they shall give a direction and impulse to their own movements, that shall put in requisition all their ingenuity and effort to prevent an internal revolution; but great and important changes in the practical operations of their discipline, must be inevitable. No calculations from the past to the future can be made with a higher degree of probability, than those, which respect the consequences of expelling the members of a church for the sake of opinions involving rights and liberties. Changes in views and feelings must then begin which shall render the continued and consistent spirit and practice of discipline impossible—whatever may happen to the expelled, should they be utterly exterminated, still changes must go on in the disciplinary departments of the expellers.

Having then felt a full persuasion, that the church ought to have

lay representation, that it was her right to have it; and having conceived, that the only rational means to prevent the effects of the petitions should they not be granted, would be the letting of the petitioners alone, by the church authorities; the principle of the movement, which might impel them to act against the petitioners, was settled also in my mind. If the discipline were capable of such a mode of operation; and if the absolute administrators of it were capable of forming a voluntary determination to make it operate by such a mode to the very overt act of excommunication; no change, which might directly or indirectly follow, as it regarded the discipline, could be for the worse; therefore the principle of my first movement might be benevolent. No mode of discipline can be worse than that which excommunicates members who petition ministers to grant them rights and liberties. Changes, almost radical, have taken place among the expellers; they are still going on; and they will go on; but never go back. The old spirit and practice of the discipline can never be regained. Names and forms may be retained; and be more extolled than ever; and when all comes to all, and the change cannot be denied; the old cover all, and cure all, may be resorted to, viz: Methodism is a child of providence; providence points to changes, and like a dutiful child she follows. But the men who have been loudest in the cry against the evils and mischiefs of the representationists will never admit, that they could ever have conceived a good intention, or felt an emotion of good will. In their eagerness to fix bad motives upon opponents they overlook the consequences of their own acts. An event like this moral martyrdom of so many ministers and members of a church for principles, and for truth's sake could not have happened in any country not wholly enslaved, much less in America, without important results to humanity. I have believed, and therefore have not made haste. The changes which began to take place in the discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, when of its own free will, as its own act and deed, without a shadow of necessity, it expelled as honest men from its bosom as ever lived in it, cannot well progress faster, while the Methodist Protestant Church exists. If this church comes to nothing, they will be accelerated. The impulse to the feeling of equality, which has proceeded from the mode, which I made choice of in the secrecy of the closet, has been felt in the old church, and is now indirectly operating. The difference in the direct and indirect mode of operation, implies no change in the principle. The first result will be a feeling of independence. The converts to lay

representation should know these closet exercises of my mind and heart; and the historian should be informed of them from my own pen. Not but that they all might have existed in the minds and hearts of other men, if I had never lived, or never had a pen. But I intended, I resolved, years before, that if the prerogative men expel representationists, the principle in the discipline, they shall use as the instrument shall be neutralized in their own hands; and by their own hands; because it will deserve to be neutralized. Now, whether these intentions and resolutions, are ever realized in fact or not; whether they are good or bad; right or wrong; they existed, and the moral character of the mind and heart that conceived and cherished them, is by the disclosure of the secret, submitted to impartial posterity. The seeming attempts at concealment; the fictitious signature; the indirect methods of writing; the writing about one kind of persons or things and meaning others; the half serious and half jocose manner; and the real earnestness and severity of tropes, or figures of rhetoric were not chance work, or the matter of necessity. All my first interests, and all my personal interests were deeply involved in non-expulsion. I could foresee no gain from it; but harm and loss to myself, and those who were dearer to me than myself. The most keen sighted antagonist can perceive no motive for my ambition, and therefore, when he accuses me of it, he is forced to assume, that it has bewildered and betrayed me. But I rest quite easy, in the confidence, that when the time comes (and that it surely will come) to give these essays an impartial reading, that the impartial reader will see, that all the ambition I could have was first, to aid and assist the travelling preachers, to admit by a direct and immediate process of their own legislation, the check giving principle of lay representation; and the second, if they not only refused; but returned evil for good; and drove us from the church; they should be compelled to make retribution to offended liberty and equality with their own hands. My ambition is gratified, by sitting still and looking on, and marking with a patient and steady eye, the unerring, though to them unintentional movements to the final issue.

The defence, and the evidence of the defence of the expelling powers, cannot be materially varied. Any discovery they may make, cannot be made an argument in favor of what they did for other reasons. In the eye of history, we can have no advantage of each other, save what facts and evidence may give. In this respect I have been in danger, and our common cause has been in danger. Our friends have been careless, if not well nigh insensible of the

importance of historical documentary evidence. The three years, which preceded the formation of union societies, and while the nucleus of our party was secretly and almost silently forming, in another generation might have become like a region of conjecture; a kind of fabulous period, beyond the points of authentic history. Will they not now form a period for historical division. There were not more than from four to five hundred copies of the periodicals, in which my first essays were published, circulated. These volumes have now become scarce, even where they were circulated. It is doubtful whether by the time an impartial history can be written, a whole set can be found. Such, is the nature and connection of the whole subject, and so much depends upon the preconceiving mind, that a single mistake respecting motives and intentions, might involve great errors, as, indeed, has already happened. If the preachers and members of the Methodist Episcopal Church should now be disposed to read my incipient essays, they could not obtain them. Even our young preachers, are left almost wholly in the dark, on those early circumstances, it much concerns them to understand. See the condition, in which those who come after us must be left, without these original sources of information. Comments and controversies (we are not without able ones) not only leave their own impressions on the mind; but the impression of antagonist writers also. True history cannot be written without authenticated original documents. How indispensable, then, with all its poverty, and imperfection, will this collection prove; and how necessary is it, that it should be made under the eye of the writer. In a few years, one event will have happened to the writer and the originals. All therefore, that was, and just as it was; no more, no less; no better, no worse; the early, the first mode of excitement; the matter, and manner, in which, and by which, writers set the thoughts a working; and not the sentences and parts of sentences, picked out, and distorted by opponents, must be studied, in order to come to the knowledge of the truth of this controversy.

Let it be kept in mind, that this is not an improved edition of my essays, with additions or enlargements. It is a collection intended to answer the purposes of historical documents. To alter or suppress any of the parts, or to add to them, would be to destroy their identity. And to have printed others with them, though of infinitely greater intrinsic worth, would add nothing to their character. They were written alone; the production of one mind. They first appeared as strangers, without any recommendation, but the editor's passport. May they not now in some respects, answer to

the supposed offices of the Lares, or household Gods of the ancients; drive away the evil spirits of error and misrepresentation. The most valuable legacy parents can leave their children, as has been well said, is not their success alone, but a fair reputation. Those who have nobly contended for liberty, though not always successful, have always been the favorites of fame.

The intention of the publication of this collection is, not only to enable the enquirer to know what I did write; but what I did not write, and why I did not. It will be noticed, perhaps, how little is said in these essays about a government for lay representationists. When the expulsions took place, my relation became changed. In my first essays, I had no one to consult with. In the first movements of the expelled; they did not feel the need of my counsel, and so did not ask it. I had thought much upon these matters; but it was always for a state of things, which I hoped would never come to pass; and if it should come to pass, might leave me out of the list; or at most should I be included in it, leave me still as an equal. Each individual, had felt as an equal to me, and felt too, as though the plan that made him so was his own. Men generally feel so, when they hear others express their own thoughts, before they themselves have expressed them. It was this equality that made heroes of all; and heroines of those women, who followed the martyrs of principle, through the evil report, they had to suffer. Movements of moral sublimity.

Much has been said about conventional arguments, and compacts, real or implied. Before the formation of union societies, in strictness of speech, no relation existed among writers or petitioners, answering to them. But in regard to myself, there was a most solemn compact with my God (if it may be so called) to which my conscience was witness, that in lay representation matters I would be no man's superior. Such however was the relative condition of all, in point of fact, that there could be no constitution making operation among us, which would not prove to be inequality making; or the changing primitive and actual relations of equality, into artificial relations of inequality. All who had labored, or suffered, or had been expelled, for the sake of the common cause, were in fact volunteers; and it always seemed to me, that no new relation could in equity be imposed upon them in their life time, without their personal consent. In this respect, my views of social justice had long corresponded with those of the *Friends*. And besides, as has been shewn, I was religiously bound to make no artificial distinctions among representationists. Others, it seems had no such

views, or opinions; they of course had no such scruples. With the arguments for or against principles, or facts, I have now no concern, as I write not as a historian, but to furnish historical evidence. History may decide against me. My draft of conventional articles, of 1828, is probably now lost. It can never again be of any use. The opinion of the majority of the convention was probably, expressed by one of the members, in the well known verses, on dislike.

"The reason why I cannot tell;
But I like you not, Doctor Fell."

No man had acted with me, in these matters of conscience; no one was under any obligations to me, as I had sought to bind no one to any conditions. In constitution and discipline concerns, I can have neither praise nor blame; and it is no part of the business of this introduction to praise or blame them.

I now address myself particularly to the descendants, and successors of those who were expelled, or suffered, or labored for the sake of lay representation:—My respected younger friends, it is to you, I confide this collection of my essays (as historical documents) for safe keeping. When I am gone the way of all flesh, your fathers who then survive, must soon follow. You will learn from these essays, how, I was first a forerunner, then an equal, and finally a follower of those, who made the good confession before many witnesses. A three fold relation of a very small number, if of any save Mr. Stockton and P. B. Hopper, Esq. The statements and evidences of an actual condition of equality, will be to you I trust, quite convincing; and will be duly appreciated, as due to those local preachers who labored, if not more abundantly than others, did labor very diligently, and when called to make the choice, chose rather to suffer excommunication, than to betray the rights of the laity. The consequences of equality among those volunteers, in precluding the official relations of teachers and learners, as already stated, I flatter myself, will also appear evident to you. But I now feel myself deeply concerned to state to you, that neither this equality, nor its consequences, can descend. Nature disowns the relation of equality between parents and children, and grace also. Law and gospel agree in requiring children to obey their parents. Is not this perpetual, and undeviating command, founded upon natural inequality? Parents in a social and religious state, have a social, and religious knowledge, which their children cannot inherit by birth right, and which they cannot acquire without precept, as

well as example. Every parent is a natural teacher, and every child a natural learner. In reference to this view, I, at an early period, began my parent's catechism, &c. When this subject is touched in these essays, the axioms, or maxims, in my mind and judgment, if not expressed, were, that all children are born in a state of social and religious ignorance or ignorant of the principles of society and religion;—and that by a process of teaching and learning, they may be raised to a state of equality with their parents in these kinds of knowledge. Or in other words, that children are born unequal to their parents in knowledge; but may be raised to equality with them, by education. I hold the opinion religiously, or conscientiously, that the right of children to the equality consequent upon instruction, is a divine right; or, that it is according to the will of God, that children should be instructed in the principles of social and religious knowledge, to a degree which may enable them to become equal with their predecessors; for otherwise society and religion, however high they might be raised, must degenerate. This divine right of children to learning, or instruction becomes divine authority, or command to the parents to teach them. The propositions may be announced thus: nature and time destroy social and religious equality in society; artificial instruction, or education, restores them. The first operation must continue as long as the human race exist in a social and religious state; and the latter ought to be commensurate with it. Teaching and learning always find a sufficient natural supply of incentive and excitement, in the mutual feelings and interests of parents and children, to perpetuate them. The first obligation to teach is upon the parents; they must do it themselves, or procure, or patronize teachers to do it.

Now among the yoke fellows, who labored in behalf of lay representation, there were no children, no learners, no probationers. The name of each petitioner; the name of each of the expelled; and the name of each adherent of the principle, was as a unit, none were cyphers. One man it is true, may reap what another man has sowed; but the laborers have not equal hopes and fears. The feelings of the seedsman and the reaper, cannot be confounded. History itself, would be of no use, if all children were born equal in knowledge to their parents. Children inherit no birth right knowledge from their parents. From the beginning of the world, the first or natural vouchers of children for the opinions and actions of their fathers, is, father told me so. The birth right is to be told so. The inequality of parents and children, in social and religious

knowledge is demonstrable; and it is equally demonstrable, that teaching is the only means by which children can become equal in knowledge to their parents. As the first prompter, in the order of time, to equality; as I have now lived to witness the time, when the occasions which made it necessary are passing away, and the equals themselves are greatly diminished, and in a few years will no longer exist,—do I not owe it, as a duty to you, to caution you in a particular manner, in this very instance, against the dangerous consequences of supposing, that you have by right of succession, a participation in our equality; or which is the same thing, an exemption from instruction. A proneness of this kind, is common, if not universal. It is the maxim of freemen “All men are born equal.” And it is so convenient and taking, that it is seldom thought worth while to add, except in social and religious knowledge. Scarcely had the prosecutions of representationists ceased, or “we had (so to speak) no more firing against us,” than an alarming spirit of indocility began to disclose itself; and as some thought insubordination and anarchy. The truth however was, there were no learners in our ranks, and attempts to teach must have become well nigh abortive. The re-action of the learner’s mind did not exist. Habits had to be renewed. The transition as usual was painful, and the result doubtful. It remains for your surviving fathers and yourselves, to follow nature and time, in their perpetual operation of inequality making, and heartily pursue the course of teaching and learning, until the equilibrium is maintained. The deaths of the first successful laborers, in any great cause of piety, or patriotism, are apt to be regarded as calamities; but experience proves, that being dead, they yet speak; and that posterity thus learn more from them, than their contemporaries may have done.

My hopes of our final success, have from the beginning been derived in part from the assumption, that necessity if not choice, would compel those who might come after us to read for information, and that thus the clue to teaching and learning would be again restored. The love of reading and the love of hearing, upon the same subjects, persons or theories, are not commonly separated. No one surely ever hated to hear of what he loved to read. In a very short time the contents of this little book will be classed among the works of past generations. As it is the first of the kind, which can appear among us, if it shall be read with favor, will it not contribute to form a new era in our church? Every discovery the young mind makes by reading, not only increases its thirst for

knowledge; but shows the natural inequality in knowledge, and the efficacy of this artificial means to restore the equality.

As soon as might be, after the expulsion of the local preachers, in Baltimore, I sought an interview with them, to disclose to them my views respecting the natural, and the divinely authorised relations of teachers and learners, and pointed out to them the divine right of children, in regular order and succession, by means of instruction to become equal with parents in social and religious knowledge. I took care to notice our equality among ourselves, and the consequent impossibility of changing our relation to each other; but offered for consideration a plan by which the difficulty might be so far removed, as to admit of our making a beginning. These ideas did not take. Hopes of some favorable result from the appeals were not wholly extinguished; nor were anticipations of accessions from the old church quite given up. It did not seem to be fully appreciated, that the equality of all who should thus unite with us, would render them also unteachable. It is surprising how intelligent and reflecting men should overlook the necessary consequences of equality and inequality. If I could have gained a superiority, and the General Conference had granted us lay representation in answer to our petition; do you not perceive that it could have been of no use to me; and as things have happened, as a superior could I have gladly hailed the defeat of my friends? On a moment's reflection, one or the other of these events must have been anticipated. Could either of them have furnished food for ambition? But was not ambition common to the party? Let their faults be exposed and analyzed, and will they not be found to be the faults of equality, (equality has its faults) rather than of ambition? Is not the tendency to anarchy so much complained of, a feeling of equality too strongly confirmed, to yield suddenly, if at all, to constitutional inequality? Now, if as a secret mentor, I had any agency, if I foresaw what we might be called to suffer, how could I help foreseeing that these sufferings could only be sustained by feelings of equality; and foreseeing also, that by yielding in the trial, all would be lost? As those who were called to the test triumphed. I indeed, was not permitted to go over Jordan with them, though not hindered, I trust, by any sin of mine. This great example, (no voluntary separation under the then existing circumstances could have produced the same or equal effect,) while it failed to convert others to act from principle, was, and still is fruitful of consequences. It is indirectly working like leaven in the old lump. The spirit and practice which since prevail, are not those of primitive Ameri-

can Methodism. The expelled have provoked the expellers to jealousy and to emulation. The laity are feeling an importance, which must be followed with feelings of independence.

You will, then ask, whether I renounce all the equality usually associated with birth right? Far from it. Here too, probably, in the estimation of my friends, I err on the side of equality. Lay representation was not purchased for you for a great sum; but without money or price. The fathers and mothers won it by their heroism, for them and their heirs forever. The title is a fee simple. You are free born in the proper sense of the term. I have more than once intimated, as an opinion, that the laity in the old church are purchasing their freedom. Let it be admitted, that it may be so; and what will be the consequences to their children, or successors? Would they not inherit a lease, with a perpetual rent, rather than a deed? Surely such a supposed case is not without precedent; nor does it seem to have been without fear or anticipation. The maxim once was; and if not a golden one, it was regarded as a true one, 'Let all our houses be built plain; otherwise rich men will become necessary to us, and then farewell to Methodist discipline.' Does it cost no more money to build and support colleges and schools, than to build plain houses? And can all this money be obtained without rich men becoming necessary to us? Can societies and funds, which require great sums annually, be perpetuated by the poor alone? The money all comes of the laity, and will the poor never complain? But what was that Methodist discipline, which the necessity for rich men might oblige travelling preachers to bid a farewell to? If not the very one, was it not the very article in it, which is so utterly ignorant of such kind of laical rights as lay representation? Now, if it ever comes to pass, that travelling preachers cannot do without the money of rich men, and rich men come to know that they cannot; and the fears that the travelling preachers' exclusive disciplinary power might be lost, be realized, what will be the mode of operation? Would there be nothing like bribes, or bartering; no tacit understanding, like, if you will not discipline me, I will pay; if you do, I will not pay? Who can help seeing the vast difference between birth right liberty, and liberty so purchased? But that no propensity to regard liberty more like an article of merchandize, than as a principle to be won or secured by heroism, can under any circumstances be generated in the human mind; cannot be proved unless all history is falsified.

When the rich of their abundance shall have cast their millions into the college treasury, can you believe, that the old scenes of

expulsions can be acted over again, for the same causes and the same effects, in any of the colleges; that learned gentlemen, and gentlemen's sons, will be expelled from these seminaries of learning for speaking evil of travelling preachers, and all the wealthy contributors, say amen, to it?

Your birth right privilege, is, to go back to first principles. Those who have liberty in opinion or thought, without a legitimate title, cannot do this; they dare not draw the veil of mystery aside. The birth right of Americans, is not the battle fields of their fathers; but the declaration of independence, and the treaties won on those battle fields, by which independence was secured. So my younger friends you have not a birth right of principles which is yet to be conquered; but which is conquered for you; your birth right is a school, in which you may learn all your fathers knew, and thus become equal with them. Your birth right is a divine right. Hear the oracle. 'Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor thy father, and thy mother, (which is the first commandment ~~of~~ with promise) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on earth.' Behold the charter of social and religious liberty. Your fathers and your mothers are free, you are born to inherit their liberty, upon the condition of honoring them. Obeying their instructions in the Lord, is implied in this honor; the gospel is the standard of their instructions; their will is not absolute. It is socially well with the fathers and the mothers while they understand and maintain their social liberties; but when the children become indocile, and ignorant, and refractory, society runs into confusion and error, and must fall to pieces or be coerced by power. I have told you, that the divine right of children to be instructed to the point of equality with their parents, in the principles of society and religion, is a part of my religious belief. I oppose this belief to the religious belief of travelling preachers, that the divine right is in them. These are the points of opposition between them and me; and these are the points of conversion between us. I go for no half measures, or expedients, or accommodations. They will have all or none, their determination follows from their religious belief in their divine right to all. Who can meet them upon this ground with any belief, or right, short of religious and divine? Claim your divine right children. Let no man take your crown of educated equality. Deem it no usurpation, or sacrilege, if the gospel of the grace of God, as the law of God did David, should make you wiser than even your teachers.

The claims of the hierarchy, or the patriarchate gain one essential point, viz: the docility of all. Whether they use, or

abuse, or neglect the principle, it is right, and good in itself; in the abstract. We have seen that the necessity of it is laid in nature and time, which will transmit no knowledge from one generation to another without instruction. The whole history of the opposition to the exclusive claims of the patriarchate in all degrees, goes to prove, that indocility on the part of the opposers is apt to follow, and never does follow without evil consequences. Ours was an extreme and almost unexampled case. Its contrast to that of the apostles, already intimated, is very striking. The apostles were all equally ignorant; but they had one common teacher. We were all equally wise, and needed no teacher; but still in so far as equality was concerned the effects were the same. The apostles did not learn of each other. This fact is insisted upon by St. Paul, as involving the very essence of his apostleship. I received it, says he, not from man; nor was I taught it by man; but by revelation from Jesus Christ. How could men equally ignorant teach each other? And how can men who are equally wise, or think they are, learn of each other? When the apostles had any difficulty they went to the all wise master. In our difficulties we had no master to go to; but we had a vote, and an equal right to vote. We could not give up that right. Who had a right to take it away from us? Observe how the doctrine of the equality of the apostles is demonstrated. Their equal instruction from the master made them equally capable not of instructing each other, but every body else. I am not a whit, says St. Paul, behind the chief of the apostles. So he was his equal. All the difficulties which have existed among your fathers, and which still exist among you, originate in the desperate attempt to teach each other as equals. Happily for you my dear young friends, nature has placed you, and will place your children beyond this difficulty. Be thankful to God, that you are born to learn, that your divine right to know all your fathers can teach you, is the divine authority, which imposes the obligation of duty upon your fathers to instruct you, or to procure instructors for you, to teach you how to understand and to practice those principles of society and religion, which give perpetuity to civil and religious communities on the earth;—that thy political or social existence may be long in this land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

But it will be objected, as it has often been, that in all this discussion about lay representation, there is no religion. On religion I have written a good deal, since the question of lay representation has occupied my attention; and have habituated my mind to think

upon it, without the presence of my usual prompters. At an early stage, I turned my thoughts to the causes of salvation,—to the causes or means of forming a new social christian character;—and to the causes of divisions among religious communities;—and especially, to the *law* of faith. On all these points I thought for myself, as well as by myself. But who was there to take my yoke—and learn of me?

The following is a short extract from my large essay on the causes of salvation. “By grace, ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.”

The salvation of believers is insisted upon as a fact, for without it, the argument in the text would have no application. Salvation in this and parallel cases includes the pardon and forgiveness of sins, and a state of obedience or goodness, which follows pardon, and is connected with it. An action good in itself, may be performed by a sinner, who does not repent of his sins; by a sinner who does repent of them under a consciousness of his guilt; and by a sinner who has repented, and is conscious that he is pardoned. Now this good action does not affect these three different persons, or these three different states of mind, in the same person alike, Goodness of character in a pardoned sinner, as well as the pardon itself is by grace, through faith. Pardon of sin is not by the merit of works. The merit of works may be considered in reference to the judgment of God, or of man. God does not judge any work done by a sinner, as having merit enough to procure his pardon. Man may judge a good work as meritorious; or as a duty having no merit. In the latter case he cannot rely upon it, or trust in it, for pardon; in the former case his trust will be false and useless. The works of a sinner have no sacrificial merit, and the sinner's belief that they have, cannot transfer any to them, and of course cannot save him. Sinners cannot pardon their own sins; they cannot do any work to merit their pardon from God. Salvation is by grace through faith; it is the gift of God. But a sinner cannot be conscious of salvation, or feel, or know that he is saved, without faith. No outward demonstration of salvation can be made; and no inward exercise of the mind or heart can realize it, while in a state of unbelief. If one feels any state, which he believes is impossible, he must conclude it is a delusion. Faith is a medium of knowledge, and it is a form or mode of knowledge. So unbelief may be a medium of ignorance, and a mode of ignorance. In all intellectual and moral conditions, faith and unbelief have great agency.

Grace is a primary, or moving cause. After the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared. Faith is an instrumental cause. Salvation is not like creation. Faith is not necessary to our creation or existence. To be saved through faith, faith must not only exist, but all the causes necessary to its origin and existence. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Boasting is excluded by the law of faith. Every emotion and modification of the mind and heart connected with faith, leads to, or implies dependence. How can they hear without a preacher; and how can they preach except they be sent. A promise is to be believed, and of course a promiser. But a promise without an equivalent for the thing promised, is an act of grace. The thing promised is a gift. Behold how unbelievers fail of salvation.—Grace makes the promise, or offer to faith, and unbelief rejects it.

The fact being admitted, that at the early period, when Paul wrote to the Ephesians, they were saved; time must be taken into the account. The christian religion was then a new religion, and the Ephesians were among its most recent converts. Had time therefore been required for works necessary to save them, it must have been borrowed from some older religion. But salvation by grace, through faith;—the gift of God, depending upon spiritual and mental operations, rather than outward works, did not require the same time. The sacrificial work, or the meritorious work was done, not by themselves, but for them, by another, by grace, as a gift, and they were to believe it. These Ephesians since their pardon had not sufficient time to become good by habit. They must therefore, have been good before, or have been made good by the grace of God. What was the state of the fact? Were they good before? Let us hear the apostle, “you were dead in trespasses and sins,” says he, “wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we had our conversation in time past, in the lusts of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath even as others. Wherefore, remember, that ye being in time past gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision, by that which is called the circumcision, in the flesh made with hands, that at that time, ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.—How were they brought from such a state? See the answer. “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins,

hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved) we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. The salvation of a people, in so corrupt, and helpless, and hopeless a state, in so short a time, could not have been of themselves; nor of works. The assumption of such a proposition would have shocked reason, especially, if contrasted with the following character of the salvation. Sealed with the holy spirit of promise, the earnest of the eternal inheritance. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye might know what is the hope of his calling. What the exceeding greatness of his power. We both have access by one spirit unto the father; builded together for a habitation of God through the spirit; strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man; rooted and grounded in love—walking with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love, speaking the truth in love, &c.

Suppose then, that the apostle had said; it is now but a short time since I found you, O ye Ephesians, in such a state of sin; and in so short a time, ye have made yourselves so holy, and happy, of yourselves, and of your works, without the grace of God, without faith, and without the gift of God; you may well therefore boast, for surely no men could have greater cause of boasting. Suppose the apostle had said thus, would he not have shocked all reason?

It may confidently be affirmed, that effects do not spring from causes, before the causes exist. Grace as a cause of salvation precedes it.

Christianity was a new religion. It was new to Paul, and he was a new minister of it; the effects of his preaching were also new. But Paul was not converted from atheism, or infidelity. He had been very religious, in the popular meaning of the term. From being one of the strictest, of the most strict sect of the Jews, a conscientious and zealous pharisee, he became a christian, and an apostle. And he acknowledges, that Judaism, in any sense of the word, had no influence in his salvation. He parted with all in opinion, and in fact to win Christ; and he did win him, with the loss of all things. He was found in Christ.

Whoever claims to have saved himself by his works, may be fairly asked, when? When did you do it? Before you were a christian, or afterwards? If before, were you a Jew, or a Gentile? In either case you may boast. If afterwards, how many years did it take you to save yourself by your works?

Let us apply our reasons by analogy. Is church government, in any form necessary to salvation? Is government grace, or is it works? To which class does it belong? Is church government necessary to the awakening, and conversion of sinners, or to the commencement of a new church? Men are, and may be saved, before they become members of a church at all.

The necessity of church government, is urged, in almost every instance against new churches, as though there were no such text in the New Testament, as "By grace, through faith." The objection does not assume, that a church cannot continue under all circumstances, without some government; but that it cannot begin to be, as though government "lies against" newly saved, or converted persons, who continue in their first love. Is not the looking for a model of church government in a primitive church, in some respects, like looking for salvation by works in it? Or like looking for examples of feeding on strong meat, among babes, who are fed on milk only?

It is of the utmost importance, that not only the fact of the existence of the first church should be settled, but the cause also. Was the cause divine? or was it human? or was it so far unknown, as to appear accidental? The answer is, it was grace, and faith; by grace, through faith: the gift of God; not human agency, or accident. To all the members of the first church, when it first began, the whole must have appeared new. They remembered the time when the church was not. The apostles too were the newest of all preachers.

We may begin in this country with the last edition of the discipline of the Methodist Episcopal church, and go back in a chronological order, to the conversion of Mr. Wesley; and by applying to every change or addition of the discipline the universal principle or rule, that no cause can follow an effect; cut off all boasted causes of salvation one by one, or compel their advocates to deny the salvation of all, before the date of those assumed causes. Thus the episcopacy was introduced in 1784. Not a soul was saved by it, before it was brought into operation, and so of every case. We do not contend, that lay representation is necessary to salvation; for if we did we must deny our own salvation; but we do contend, that it will not necessarily prevent salvation. It does not destroy nor adulterate any truth, as it is in Jesus. It takes no jewel out of the Saviour's crown. It does not frustrate the grace of God. To say that the friends of lay representation cannot be saved, or be a church, must mean or imply, that God will not give

his grace to them, or that the principle and practice are displeasing to God. To be saved by grace, through faith, accords with the axiom 'God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.'

Almost all my reputation as a preacher, was derived from themes and subjects of grace and faith, which either sprung from, or led to the idea of lay representation. Several of these discourses have been admired by travelling preachers. Their effects upon myself have often been great. My plan has been to publish a second volume of miscellaneous essays, and a third volume, exclusively religious or theological. Either of the volumes might thus be read by itself, though the others might not please, or be regarded with indifference.

NICHOLAS SNETHEN.

Baltimore, Sept. 15th, 1835.

Note.—The original overran the calculation. The remaining essays in the "Intelligencer" are omitted, as they would have made the volume disproportionately thick.

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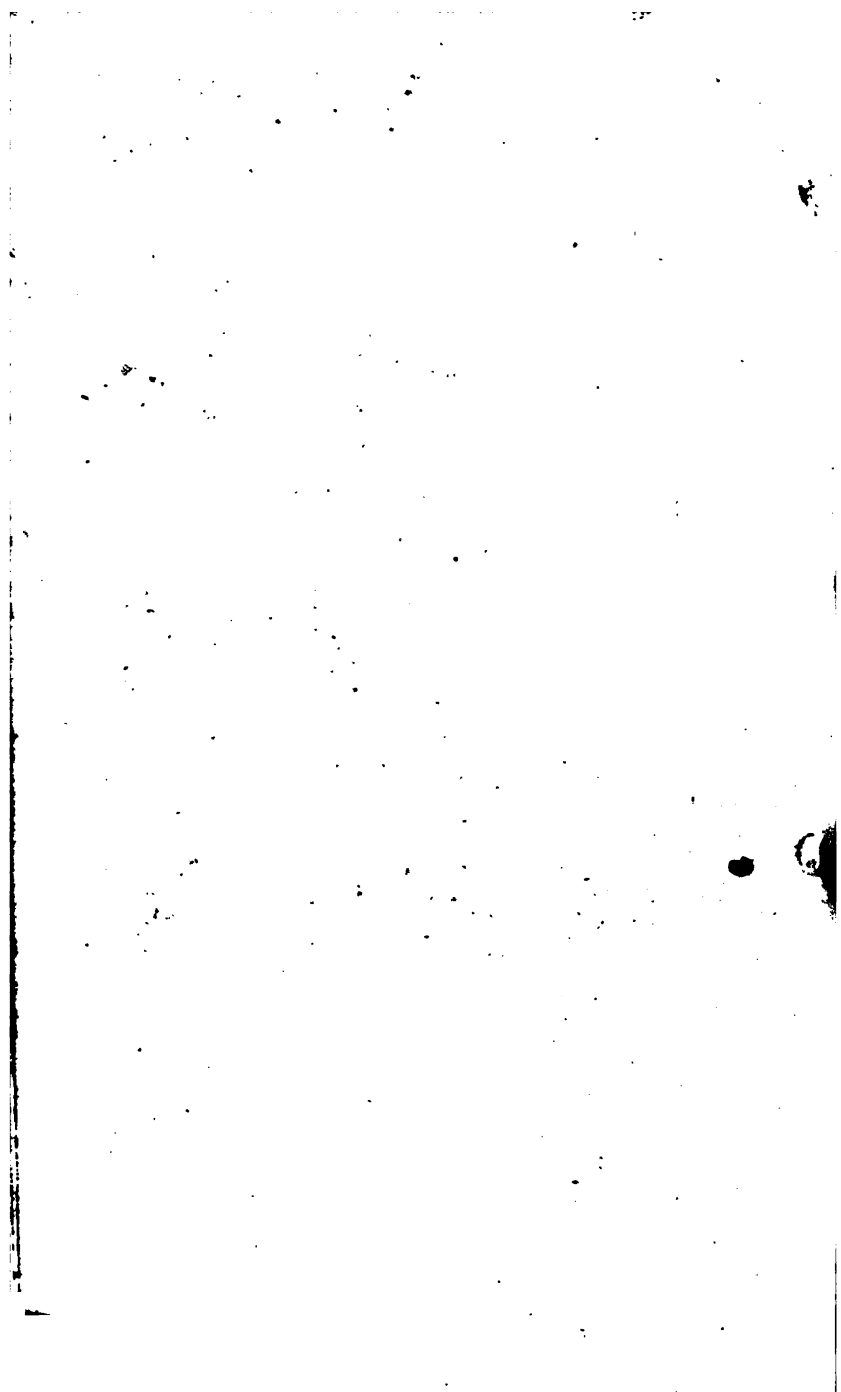
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SNETHEN ON LAY REPRESENTATION.

No. I.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. II. August, 1822. pages 132—161.

Remarks and observations addressed to travelling preachers.

These essays were first printed in December, 1820, and sent to travelling preachers only.

The writer of these remarks believes, that the friends of the plan of itinerancy in the Methodist Episcopal church, have more to fear from the natural and irresistible tendency of extremes to vibrate opposite ones, than any other cause. He is one of those theorists, who conceives that the love of power is so general among men, that in any order of society, civil or religious, those who yield the principle of liberty will never want a master;—that the love of power is not always “a master passion that swallows up the rest,” but sometimes not only divides its dominion with other passions, but condescends to minister to them; that though avarice and voluptuousness may be suspended by ambition, yet the world never witnessed the absolute possessors of unlimited power, through any long series of time, “in regular order and succession,”—in poverty—in nakedness—in hunger—in journeying often and having no certain dwelling place. The doctrines embraced by this writer teach him, that grace does not always act irresistibly;—that the spirit of infallibility, is not given to church rulers;—that the passions of men in official stations, do not become docile and inoffensive, in proportion, as legal checks and restraints are removed; and that there is infinite danger in trusting unlimited power in the hands of any man, or sets of men.

The discipline of the Methodist Episcopal church having divided unto its bishops more power than they themselves can execute in person, authorises them to divide the circuits and stations into districts, and to appoint elders to preside

over those districts in their absence, to do all their duties, ordination excepted. But no common or written law, or rule exists, by which these servants, or their masters for them, are made accountable to the Annual or General Conferences for their official acts. The presiding elders have power to change the preachers in the absence of a bishop, as the discipline directs, and the discipline directs that they may do it as often as they please. Not to mention how, by secret orders, or the cruel, or capricious disposition of presiding elders, preachers may be vexed and tortured out of the connexion. As the confidential servants of the bishops, the presiding elders have his ear when present, and his eye when absent. It was well said by one of the late advocates of this system, that, "they are the arms and hands of the bishops," he might have added the voice too, by which they can direct and control the General Conference, &c. The artifices under this system of delegated power, which require secrecy, may be as effectually concealed as thought itself. Any plan that may injure an unsuspecting brother, may be arranged and executed by the bishop and his presiding elder, without fear of detection. The sincerity of the writer will be indignantly appealed to, but to the question; whether it is seriously believed that bishops and presiding elders, with their present power, can injure the preachers? It may be answered, that they have no legal restraint; and that the man who disbelieves in their infallibility, must believe that they may abuse unlimited power, to the full extent of human peccability. He who admits the principle of gravity, never hesitates to admit that heavy bodies may fall through empty space.—Twenty years or more have elapsed since a respectable minority in the General Conference have contended for the right and reasonableness of making the presiding elders dependant upon the choice of the preachers. In the General Conference of 1812, a majority was supposed to be in favor of the measure, and it was so modified as to leave the power to nominate in the hands of the bishops: but, as it was known that one of the bishops would not serve if the change was made, it was lost by a small majority. In the General Conference of 1820, a committee of conciliation modified the motion still farther, and it was mutually agreed that for each vacancy which might happen by resignation, death, or otherwise, the bishops might nominate three; out of which number, the Annual Conference might choose one. But the senior bishop, and the bishop

elect, declaring the plan to be unconstitutional, and the former threatening to appeal in the last resort to the Annual Conferences, &c. at a later period in the session, when several members of the General Conference were absent, the vote was taken and the measure suspended for four years. This writer knows that a difference of opinion does exist among those who wish to modify the existing rules respecting presiding elders, but he has no reason to believe that it was ever intended that any contemplated change should directly or indirectly injure the travelling plan, nor is he able to conceive how the travelling plan could be affected by any modification of this kind.

No presiding elder could be chosen without the nomination of a bishop, and a majority of votes of an Annual Conference. This writer intreats all travelling preachers to reflect well upon the following questions: Is the Methodist Episcopal church free, sovereign, and independent of any foreign power, civil or ecclesiastical? Can such a church remain perpetually without feeling, thoughts, and a will of its own? Suppose this church should by any means signify its determination to have the presiding elders elective, &c. What measures in this free country could be adopted to coerce it into submission? Is there any exception to the maxim of the American politician, that "the foundation of no government is firm and secure, when any considerable body in the community have an interest in opposition to the government?" In a final trial of strength, what could the bishops and their presiding elders do in opposition to preachers and people? Has it not long since been proved, that episcopal patronage to unproductive pulpits, or empty houses, is a feeble auxiliary of episcopal power?

During the life time of Mr. Wesley, he held every thing in the Methodist society in his power. His maxims were, *you came to me, not I to you. If you are not willing to help me as I direct, you shall not help me at all.* The ground on which he exercised this authority was not only that he considered himself as the father of the connexion, but that the members of his society were also members of the national church, and that those who left his society, experienced no change of church relation. Now it appears that there are Methodists in this country, who suppose that the Methodist Episcopal Church does not differ from the Methodist Society in regard to the power of Mr. Wesley, and the bishops, or in respect to the right of membership. If a member is

dissatisfied, say they, the only liberty or remedy he has, is to withdraw, &c. It is not lawful to call brethren by hard names, but there is one part of their conduct calculated to render the mind a little querulous. If they admit the right of expatriation, ought they not also to admit that it is equally right, to seek citizenship elsewhere, and not to indulge quite so liberally in their censures of those preachers, and people who join other churches? But it ought to be well understood that the Methodist Episcopal church in this country is not a society within any other church, and the principle ought never to be lost sight of, or abandoned, that it is an independent church, and that if it has not certain rights and privileges, it is entitled to them; for, the right upon which it became a church, originates and secures to it, the means of obtaining all others. There was a time when all the rights and privileges now enjoyed in the Methodist Episcopal church, did not exist in it, nor were they gained without opposition. Names dignified with office, appeared as usual to vindicate primitive Methodism, and to oppose innovation. Plans were laid, arguments were used, and the alarm bell ("the travelling plan is in danger") was rung; but none of these things moved the champions of church rights from their just purpose. Do not the venerable leaders of the boundless prerogative plan remember, when by an act of a conference, not a general one, the name of *John Wesley*, as first bishop, was struck off the minutes; and when the next highest bishop on the list attempted to rebuke the conference for so doing, the preachers and people frowned him into silence? Do they not recollect when the exclusive power of trying members was deemed so necessary to the travelling plan, that a vindication of this part of the prerogative of itinerancy was written by the bishop in the commentary on the book of discipline; but the General Conference judged otherwise, conceiving that the travelling plan would do better without this power, than with it; and accordingly gave it to the members of the church? From the year 1785 to 1792, there was no General Conference; strong objections were made to one. A council was then thought to be more favorable to the travelling plan. 'May be the council was chosen by the bishop; be this as it may, nothing short of a General Conference would satisfy the preachers, and the council had to go to the wall, yet not so itinerancy, all the predictions to the contrary notwithstanding. Predictions which have been often falsified, ought to lose their credit.

It is consoling to reflect, that what have been deemed innovations, have favored the liberties of the church. If the opinions of certain men had prevailed, preachers, and members who conceived that their rights and their privileges were withheld, or violated, might have quietly withdrawn, and left the bishops and council, and an indefinite number of Annual Conferences, to cut the knots they could not untie; and the members of the church would have remained to this day at the mercy of the travelling preachers. Although the efforts of those who have maintained the long and ardent struggle have not been crowned with complete success, yet have their labors been not in vain. They have maintained a powerful minority in the General Conference, and it is to be hoped that their example will finally operate upon the preachers who are dispersed through the wilderness of the west and the south. Could any thing but the insulated condition of those men, their want of social intercourse, and those views and feelings, which can only be produced by a collision of ideas, have kept them so long from claiming the rights of an independent church, instead of cherishing self complacency in acting the humble part of mere subserviency to executive will? Will they not recover from the bewildering effects of power, and free themselves from ignoble prejudice? A moment's reflection must open their eyes to see, and their minds to perceive, what a solemn farce the General Conference would have become, if the northern preachers, like themselves, had left it quietly in possession of presiding elders, favorable to the power of bishops. *A legislative and judicial body composed of a majority of officers of executive appointment and under executive patronage?* Such a conference ought to have its right name. It is a bishop's conference. The council was not more exceptionable than a conference of executive men of the appointment of bishops. The trial of bishops by a council, might be as impartial as before a hundred men, sixty or seventy of whom might be his servants, and the rest, men who have never thought upon church matters without such prompters. A council too, as well as such a General Conference, might expel a bishop for improper conduct, if it should judge it necessary, provided he was made amenable to it for his conduct. And we may be sure that when a man's own dependents judge it necessary to expel him he will deserve to be expelled. It is impossible but that if the southern and western preachers will consider the case, they

must be convinced that either the presiding elders should become accountable to the Annual Conferences, or that a rule should be made to prevent them from becoming members of the General Conference. What liberty can there be, either in church or state, if the *legislative, executive, and judicial* power, is in the hands of the same men? What should we think of an American, who should wish to vote for a man holding an office of executive appointment for his representative? What should we think of a Congress composed of a majority of members under executive patronage? This writer does not hesitate to declare, that in such an event, he should view the liberties of his country on the same level with the liberties of the Methodist Episcopal church, with a General Conference, depending on the will of the bishops. In either case all but the name of liberty would be lost. How wonderful, how alarming, is this blindness and presumption in the minds of good men. Do they suppose they can reverse the immutable decree, "no man can serve two masters?" Dare they to trust themselves upon the giddy heights and slippery precipices of power, with the bones and mangled limbs of myriads of victims of the same temerity before them? Are not the leaves of the Holy Bible and of profane history, written within and on the backside with the admonition, *beware of power*? If, in their eagerness to grasp at power, they cannot suspect their own wisdom and integrity, how is it, that they cannot at least reflect upon the sudden changes to which all men and all things are liable that depend on the human will; "New lords and new laws," says the proverb, and even during the life-time of the old lords, "The times may change, and they may change with them." The power of the presiding elders, enormous as it is, and enviable as it may seem, is not well calculated to flatter the minds of thoughtful men. A short year may displace an officer, who holds the most potent office, at the will of another. It might gratify curiosity to know, whether in the answer to the question; "To whom shall the bishop be amenable for his conduct?" the words "to expel him if they judge it necessary," were added by accident, or by anticipation; but however they came to be inserted it happens most opportunely for a court of *executors* that it is left with their own judgment whether they shall be a court of *executioners* or not. How strange it is that such a clamor should be raised about responsibility to the General Conference. Surely there could be no danger of a con-

ference composed of a majority of presiding elders (chosen in the manner proposed by the plan of conciliation) judging that a bishop had been guilty of improper conduct in nominating three elders, much less of its judging it necessary to expel him for it. But in fact, this seemingly insignificant concession, touched the prerogative in the apple of its eye. Every thing else had only brushed the hem of its garment, or occasionally put it to temporary inconvenience. The crisis has at length arrived. From henceforth the whole secret of this mysterious policy will be unveiled; every eye will see it; and every artifice to explain it away, will only serve to make it seven-fold more evident. May it not be presumed, that the friends of just principles of church government, have experienced their last defeat, and that their opponents will be no longer able to maintain their ground? At the end of two years will they not be confounded, if they are not convinced—and make some atonement for past errors, by their promptness to correct them; Will not amazement seize upon the Annual Conferences when they come to consider the manner in which they have thrown away their suffrages, a privilege next in importance to the Gospel itself? When the true spirit of American legislation shall arise in the majesty of its strength, and demand for the Methodist Episcopal church an independent legislature. Then will the government of the church repose upon the immoveable basis of a just division, and eternal distinction between executive, legislative, and judicial powers; then will the Methodist Episcopal church take her station among her sister churches in this free and happy land. The finger of scorn shall no longer be pointed at her. She shall no more be a by-word, and a reproach. Her friends will not blush to own her name. The zeal of her sons shall carry the gospel in one hand, and the principles of rational religious liberty in the other. The book of discipline will then become a fit companion for the bible, and the name of episcopacy will no longer frighten thousands from embracing Methodist doctrines.

The experience of all ages and countries proves that the science of government, though the first in importance to mankind, is the most difficult to be learned, and to be reduced to practice. Although the giving of the civil magistrate power to interfere in matters of conscience by uniting the church to the state, has justly met with infinite opposition in our country, it is not to be presumed that the prin-

ciples of civil and religious liberty are no wise analogous. For, although the wants of civil and religious society may differ in form and detail, and may require different applications; yet the rights and privileges of both may be vindicated upon the same principles. Whatever may be the mode of government, the principles of freedom are fixed and eternal, and are entitled to consideration independent on the characters of rulers. It may be in some cases in the power of genius, guided by virtue, to give a temporary and limited control to erroneous principles; but no human art or effort, can prevent the effect they ever tend to produce; the ultimate ruin will be as inevitable as fate. An absolute or unlimited form of government may be traced to the authority of a father in his own family. The patriarch becomes the head of the tribe, and if circumstances require him to exercise it in arms, he loses none of his domestic authority in the camp, or in the field. The Emperor, the King, the High Priest, &c. cannot have more power than a father in his own family. Whoever succeeds to this kind of power, or rather usurps it in a church or a state, needs no other to become the most desperate of tyrants. Fathers anciently, according to the testimony of history, exercised the power of excommunication, and of life and death over their children. If there could have been any true legal successor to the power of the primogenitor of the race, or the nation, his right to govern them absolutely would have been indisputable. It is in vain to contend for civil or religious liberty, unless it can be first demonstrated that the very doctrine of succession to patriarchal or paternal authority is wrong:—is contrary to nature. Parental affections are not transferable—no man can succeed to the feelings of a father. The absolute power of a parent can only be qualified by parental feeling. The cruelty of “step dames” has been proverbial in all times. Would it offend against the truth, to call those who arrogate to themselves the paternal attributes of government, political or ecclesiastical “step-fathers.” Every matter of fact evidence, every argument *aposteriori*, goes to demonstrate that paternal power, as soon as it ceases to be qualified by parental affection, begins to degenerate into tyranny, and therefore ought not to be perpetuated beyond the life of the real father himself: “The government of *China* bears a strong resemblance to what has been called the patriarchal form, from whence it is supposed to have been originated. The emperor pos-

sesses the most unlimited authority, and can issue new laws, or abrogate old ones at his pleasure. He is the undisputed master of the lives and liberties of his subjects, and no sentence of death can be executed without his consent. To his revision in like manner, every verdict in civil suits is subject, and has no force, till it receives his confirmation. All his own sentences are executed without delay, and all his edicts acknowledged throughout the empire, as if they were the mandates of the Deity. He is the source of all power in his dominions; dispenses honors at his own will, and appoints, and dismisses, the Mandarins of every class without control. The princes of the blood alone, or those who bear that title, cannot be degraded, or punished without a trial, but as the sovereign has the power of nominating the judges, he always possesses the means of disposing of the life, or liberty of the highest personages who incur his displeasure, &c. &c. &c." "This unlimited power of the crown appears to be as ancient as the empire itself, and is regarded as one of the fundamental laws of the government. It is still further augmented, and confirmed by the principle of filial respect towards the government, which is carefully instilled into every one of the people from their birth, which arises almost to adoration, and which represents all disobedience to the commands of the monarch as an unpardonable crime." To this picture of patriarchal government in China, it is proper to add that the Tartar dynasty, who now rules over the Chinese people, have not one drop of Chinese blood in their veins; and that this paternal power has been succeeded to by conquest.

In this country we have one name dignified by courtesy, with the title of "father of his country." But Washington himself received his commissions of commander in chief, and President, from the American people, and into their hands he resigned them. No individual can claim the distinction of father of American independence. The American people were the makers of their own political fortunes, and not any individual. No paternal government ever existed in the United States, this is the freest of all governments, because the constitution, and the laws, are purified from every vestige of paternal power. Every office is defined by law, every officer is responsible to the people, and no two offices are united to the same person. Had any man claimed, and been recognized as the successor of the claims of the British government, we could not have been

free; for we became free in consequence of throwing off the power of the mother country; that is the patriarchal power, or its claim to the right of taxing us without our consent. The degree of freedom in every country is found to be in proportion to the degree it has freed itself from patriarchal power, or has substituted laws in the place of it. In regard to religious freedom, the paternal authority in succession is as hostile to it, as to civil freedom. All ecclesiastical tyranny may grow from this root, and in most cases may be traced to it. Both the name and the thing, are in some cases retained in the church—Patriarch,—Pope,—Right Rev. Father in God, &c. are names of the same origin, and import. The patriarch of Constantinople, the Pope among the Romanists, the Rt. Rev. Father in God among the English and others, differ from each other only as genus and species, if they differ at all. What mode, or form of church government is wholly freed from patriarchal power? Why should the lovers of religious liberty, attempt to disprove the succession from St. Peter? Is it not plain that if an ordinal succession from St. Peter, or any other apostle, could be proved, the successor might be among the greatest of the ecclesiastical tyrants. The government of popes, or of any body else, may be very primitive, and yet as has been shewn may be improper in succession. The apostles were real fathers, founders and planters of churches. "They could do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. Their bowels yearned over those they had begotten through the gospel. They preached at a time and in places where Christ was not named. They were wise master builders, who laid the foundations for others to build upon, &c." But by what mysterious, what magical influence is it, that the children can become fathers of their great grand-fathers? It is certainly as much beyond the power of grace as it is of nature. Our objection to a papal form of government, is not only founded upon the excess of its power, above the apostolic, but to its attempt to arrogate to itself apostolical attributes in succession. But as Methodists, we also have had religious fathers, and founders, who constituted us, and not we them. Now it is difficult if not impossible, for fathers to raise their children, to equality in power with themselves. Children can hardly bear such equality, or treat their fathers as equals. Nature ordains and limits parental power to parents themselves. Few instances occur of parents and children doing

well when parents give their property, which in this case is their power, into the hands of their children. We would not call the father of Methodism, a tyrant, even if we could prove that he was not a good father; but, though it should be demonstrated, that his parental affections were, to the utmost degree, pure, ardent, and impartial, yet we should feel infinitely hostile to the continuance or succession of his fatherly power. We have no objection, to a Methodist Episcopal Church, but to a patriarchal power in succession, in its bishops. Let us have bishops, and if all parties are agreed, a succession of them; but let all their power and authority be strictly legal, and let them be subject to legal restraints. Why should we endeavor to do violence to nature and to grace? Fathers may beget children, but those children cannot be fathers to one another. If a brother attempts to assume the authority of a father over his brethren, he embraces the principle of tyranny, by the very attempt. In so far as the founder of Methodism wished (if he did wish) to perpetuate patriarchal authority in bishops, he labored under an error of the most disastrous consequence; for that germ of tyranny, would be thus cherished in the church, which has proved fruitful of oppression in every age.

But what opinion can be entertained of those who can obtain their own consent, to accept of such paternal attributes? Do they really think that the office will create the affections necessary to qualify unlimited power? or, that it will engender in the bosoms of those whom they shall attempt to govern, a correspondent degree of filial reverence? Fatal mistake! They will prove to their sorrow, little else in their administration, than a struggle with the repulsive disposition of the human heart; "Paul I know, and Jesus I know, but who are ye!" The father knows his children, and the children their father; but what legitimate relation can be recognized in these "step-fathers," or by them. In vain shall they rely upon nature or grace to originate natural or gracious obedience, to unnatural and ungracious authority. Just so much of the fatherly authority of the founder of Methodism, as a Methodist bishop accepts, just so much his authority exceeds that of a christian bishop. No man but a proper father has any right to exercise unlimited authority in the church. Legal checks are necessary for the preservation of religious liberty. Say you that you govern after the manner of the apostles? O! say not so. It would

be tyranny in you to do as the apostles did, as much as it would for you to do in another man's house or family, just as he does. There can be no equality between parents and children, but as soon as children become independent of parental authority, they have a natural and inherent right to enter into a state of equal society among themselves. Parents have no right by their last will and testament, to entail sovereignty on some of their children; and slavery on the rest. In this respect, God be praised, men are born free.

Religion, when considered in respect to the relation between God and man, can give rise to no question of church government; but when it is considered in regard to the religious themselves, it involves very intimate and important social principles. How then can we endure the hypothesis, that according to the New Testament, all the principles which lead to civil tyranny, are sanctioned in the church to their full extent, and that reliance is placed upon supernatural power to correct them. Such an hypothesis offends against every view we can take of the divine dispensations. Was it ever known that infinite wisdom and omnipotent power, were displayed to produce either natural or moral paradoxes? In this case, unfortunately, the mischief is not only done before the remedy is applied, but is beyond the power of the remedy. The trespasses of ecclesiastical power upon the social rights of religion, have ever been followed by wide spreading ruin. Destruction, as well as misery, are in all its ways. The New Testament abounds with the soundest social principles and maxims; but as it regarded the apostles, they did not go into operation in their full extent, by reason of the plentitude of their apostolical authority, which we have seen was a species of the patriarchal. We behold in their case, the family in the life-time of the parents. Their practice of course resembled more the management of children than the proceedings of equals, ministering justice among men under circumstances of equality. All the advantage of age and experience, as well as of inspiration, were on the side of the apostles. They had no competitors, or equals, in these respects. None could succeed to their circumstances, or to their work. No particular case can have more than one beginning. One resurrection could have but one set of witnesses. Now, let it be supposed, that a church is oppressed by a tyrant, as subtle as he is cruel; who, by a common refinement in policy,

contrives to make his ambition minister to his popularity; but when complaints can no longer be suppressed; when the injurious effects of unlimited power can no longer be denied; recourse is had to apostolic and primitive precedent, to prove that no authority exists in the church, by which its rulers can be restrained or corrected. Is it not plain that this position, and all the arguments predicated upon it, must be treated as mere artifices of despotism, or the precepts of the New Testament may be trodden under foot? Let us answer all these fictions of ambition at once—true, the fathers commanded, and the children obeyed; but you are not fathers, and we are not your children. You have no right to exercise any but legal authority. You must be legally restrained, from injuring those whom you ought to govern. Every society which has a right of existence, has a right of preservation. When Jesus Christ sent forth his disciples, he sent them as lambs among wolves; with instructions to “be as wise as serpents, and as harmless as doves,” but St. Paul foresees that the shepherds of the flock will be converted by the lust of power into ravening wolves; that from among those very elders, whom the Holy Ghost had made overseers, there would arise men, who would speak perverse things.

Brethren, whenever you hear the advocates of unlimited power pleading as precedents, the acts, or the opinions of the founder of Methodism, or any one else, do not suffer your minds to be beguiled by venerable names. Look steadily to consequences, and make your determination either to take a timely and resolute stand, or to submit to an endless succession of Right Reverend Fathers in God, or Popes, or Patriarchs. They will not indeed be lords primates of all England, nor Bishops of Rome, nor of Constantinople; but a change of title, or of residence, will not alter the nature of the office: it will be of the same class. Methodist bishops, with unlimited patriarchal power in succession, must, like their predecessors of other names, of other countries, and of other ages, have recourse to an infinity of arts to supply the want of real relation. Conscious of the artificial nature of their power, and full of suspicion, lest those whom they call children have no filial and cordial affection for them; no solid basis for mutual confidence can exist between them. Already have some specimens been exhibited of the genuine nature of this paternal principle among us. It will not now bear the sight or the an-

ticipation of legal restraints any more than formerly. Evidence is not wanting that men of a few years standing in the ministry, feel no checks of conscience, when they are about to succeed to all the paternal powers of fathers covered with years, and glory, and environed around with thousands of affectionate sons. Will the aged, and toil-worn servants of the gospel bow to the mitre on their youthful heads, with the affection and docility of children?

If we may trust to the conduct of the advocates of unlimited power, the great danger lies in setting bounds to the prerogative of the patriarchs in succession. From their arguments it may be inferred, that if every bishop is not endued with as much power as the father of Methodism, the apostolical plan will be subverted, and the cause of God ruined. Peter had power, and did not abuse it, and therefore his successors cannot abuse it, is an argument of the same kind which those use, who contend that Methodist bishops ought to have all the powers of the founder of the society. The arguments in either case might have some effect upon us, if we believed in the transmigration of souls. We who live in this age do not behold the wonder which St. John saw. The great mystery now is not a woman clothed with the beams of the sun, but a church almost two thousand years older than its present father. This wonderful case is in part accounted for by the doctrine of succession, but is more fully explained by the principle of being born back again, or of degeneration. Every time this spiritual child gets a new father, it is reduced to its original infancy; and so to the end of time will be kept in a perpetual state of childhood, and dependence, and will never be able to live without a father. The same phenomenon will appear in the Methodist Episcopal Church, if its bishops continue to be a race of fathers. These successors must continue to manage the church just as a father does his children, as a church cannot arrive at manhood as long as the patriarchal power lasts.

It was not without hesitation and reluctance, that any political parallels were introduced; but it cannot but be perceived in the epitome that has been given of the Chinese government, that its origin and nature are applicable, with a few exceptions, to what is called popish or fatherly government in the church in perpetual succession. And the reflection unavoidably obtrudes itself, that eternal fatherhood, and eternal childhood are inseparable. How exactly

the actual state of things accords with this theory no argument is necessary to prove. Is not obedience to the successive fathers of the church, as they are called, secured by a system of education almost like that of China? Is not filial respect for them amounting almost to adoration, instilled into the minds of the people from their birth? Are they not taught to consider all disobedience to their order, as next to unpardonable crime?

What is a constitution? According to the opinion of the most approved writers upon the subject, it is an instrument of relation that cannot be made, altered, or abrogated by a legislative power; but by the united consent and authority of a whole community. The United States, and each individual state in the union, have a written constitution from which the legislative authority is derived. In other countries where the form of government cannot be traced to any common act, or choice of the people, much pains have been taken, and great learning displayed, to prove that a constitution may exist without such choice or consent. Americans however think otherwise, and act accordingly. In the Methodist Episcopal Church, no instrument was ever dignified with the name of a constitution; but in the year 1808, six articles were framed under the denomination of limitations and restrictions. In that year, about the usual number of travelling preachers, an hundred or a little upwards, met in the General Conference, at the appointed interval of four years, without any previous instructions from others, or notice from themselves, of an intention to do any other than the ordinary acts of a General Conference, except in regard to the future election of its members, and did then, and there, determine, that the General Conference should thereafter be composed of representatives in equal proportion of all the annual conferences, in order that all the travelling preachers might have equal influence in the General Conference, as it was found in fact, that a majority of the General Conference was composed of preachers near the place of its sitting, &c. &c. and that it should be limited and restricted as intimated above, &c. but the word *constitution* is not found in the book of discipline. And if we may be permitted to think and speak as Americans, neither that General Conference, nor any body among us, was ever organised or endowed with prerogatives, to make a constitution. The General Conference of 1808, might signify its opinion or wish to its successors, but the most that can be said of its limiting

and restricting enactments, is that they are laws having no more binding authority upon its successors, than legislative acts. It is to be hoped that every preacher will admit that the General Conference of 1808 had none of the attributes or powers of constitution makers, as all are infinitely interested in disavowing such a precedent, and in having the origin, and nature of a constitution, clearly and distinctly defined.

For it may be presumed that every American who turns his attention to the subject, and examines it, will decide upon it according to the just and equitable principle upon which the present glorious charter of their civil liberties is founded. Can any thing shock the mind of an American more than the idea of a constitution originating in the implied construction of the voluntary acts of certain individuals, and deriving strength from the silent operation of time. Those who are disposed to maintain that the acts of the General Conference of 1808, were of a constitutional nature, though not so named, will of course disclaim the constitutionality of all acts prior to that date. Previously to that memorable epoch, the rule makers in conference acted professedly upon the assumption that every generation grows wiser and wiser. They conceived it to be proper to tell their brethren that in their judgment it was advisable to review their former acts; and to take advantage of past experience. We are not now attempting to shew which is the better mode; nor are we disposed to give any opinion at this time upon the merit of these six restrictions; all we contend for is, that if they were really intended for a constitution, those who acted with such intention, overleaped the bounds of all authority and precedent ever furnished in this country. If those who come after them choose to be bound by them, be it so; but how strangely does it sound to hear men declare that their legislative predecessors took away from them the power of legislating.

As the General Conference of 1820, were pretty equally divided upon the question of constitutionality, it seems that they took an order to advise with the annual conferences upon the subject, which to this hour, is, without form and void, and darkness remaining upon the face of it. When the creating power shall pronounce its fiat,—Let there be a constitution.—Let there be delegates organised, and empowered, after the manner of Americans.—Let those delegates return the result of their proceedings to their constit-

nents, then with their approbation, let there be a constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and let all be governed, by what all have had a voice in making. But if it is not judged expedient to proceed thus, let the advocates for unlimited patriarchal power in perpetual succession, say nothing about the constitution of 1808; that supposed palladium of their cause will prove infinitely inefficacious. A spontaneous constitution is of no value in the eyes of those who have been schooled among the disciples of '76. They ought to be aware that once they begin to agitate the question, and thus break the spell of silence, others will follow the example, and they may find sooner than they think that the powerful voice is the *most numerous* one. Could a single example of discord be thrown among the annual conferences, is this said undefined and undefinable constitution to be maintained? Can any mortal believe that a General Conference, composed of one hundred to an hundred and twenty preachers, by their own voluntary act, had any right to ordain, or that the bishops should forever afterwards have the sole right of presiding elders, unless all the annual conferences, by a majority of two-thirds of their delegates, should vote to the contrary? Or, that if they had meant such a limitation, or restriction, they would have left it to be understood, or implied, and not have passed it in a very letter? The Delegated General Conference, says the restriction, "shall not change, or alter any part, or rule of our government, *so as to do away* Episcopacy, or (which it seems is the same thing) destroy the plan of our itinerant general superintendency!" therefore, say the oracles of the constitution, the Delegated General Conference has no power to alter the present method of choosing the presiding elders; so as to enable the annual conferences to have a choice out of three, who should be nominated by the bishops to fill each vacancy which might happen by death, or resignation, or otherwise; for that would destroy the plan of our itinerant general superintendency!" The only destruction which could be in this way, is suppositious. It would indeed destroy the unlimited powers of the bishops in that point, the choice of presiding elders, as far as the smallest conceivable limitations could do it. But until the experiment is made, any other effect must remain matter of opinion. Was there ever a more convenient plan devised to enable executive men to control legislative proceedings than this said question (as it now stands) of con-

stitutionality? In what constitution, except his own, can a bishop find power to appeal to annual conferences? How would the case be if one or two conferences should differ from all the rest? Who would govern then? There was a time before the departure of our venerable patriarch, that a hope was cherished, that after he should be taken from us, no one would wish to see patriarchal power perpetuated among us by succession. But ever since the painful necessity was imposed upon us of yielding this fond anticipation, doubts have multiplied whether the full time for the forming a constitution was yet come;—whether our views of rational religious liberty were yet sufficiently matured, and diffused for such a work. It is not enough for a people to will to be constitutionally free, they must know how to make, and to carry into effect a constitution, whose principles and provisions shall secure the rights and liberties of every member of the community. Our apprehensions upon this score will not yield in any considerable degree to evidence, until we shall begin to see bishops blush at the idea of choosing masters for others, and elders shrink back with horror from any office in which they must rule over free men without their consent. As long as men can be found among us so devoid of the spirit of religious liberty, and so unrestrained by respect for public opinion, as to vindicate as matter of right, a power which makes men lords over God's heritage, so long shall we find the attempt to make a constitution a hazardous one, and (should it succeed) the advantages problematical. It is no very difficult task for men devoted to unlimited prerogative, to make the letter of any instrument, minister to their views as has been witnessed in this present case. Before the year eighteen hundred and eight, we heard nothing about unconstitutionality on the presiding elder question; but now, though a majority of that conference be still living, and probably would declare that the idea of making the choice of the presiding elders a constitutional question never entered into their heads, and we know that a number of the members of that convention would have contended to the last extremity against such an idea; yet preachers can be terrified with the spectre of unconstitutionality. Brethren, it is the soul and spirit of a constitution which we need. That want of taste for religious liberty, of which we have so many painful examples, and that facility with which men can be induced to take offices over the heads of their brethren, whom they know

would never submit to their domination, but out of love for the peace of the church, is calculated to humble us to the dust. We bear the reproach, and are confounded. He must have a large share of grace, or of insensibility, who can reflect upon these things, without feeling almost maddened. It is a mortifying consideration, that so many good men can really think they do God service by supporting a system, which has not one amiable feature to recommend it. A General Conference of travelling elders choose a bishop, and he tells them it is unconstitutional for them to attempt to exercise any thing like a limited negative in the choice of presiding elders, and a majority of those holy men love to have it so, and determine that it shall be so for at least four years longer.* What conscientiousness! What piety! This sacred instrument, (their own construction of an ideal constitution) like the ark, must remain untouched. The speculations of good men have ever been known to be adhered to with a tenacity proportional to the religious importance which they affix to them. In pursuing this subject, let us endeavor to maintain our charity, and to exercise long suffering, and forbearance towards our brethren. We believe they are doing an indirect injury to religion; they believe that our plan will affect it immediately. We think that they are administering poison through a mistake for medicine; they think we are aiming a dagger at the heart, and find it next to impossible to believe us sincere. We on the contrary, can easily perceive, how they may be mistaken, and of course be sincere. Moreover the actual injury of their plan can be much more readily perceived by us than by themselves, not only on account of the natural slowness of the heart to believe evil of its own, but obviously, because others will not trouble them with information, or complaint. Slaves are not wont to make confidants of their masters. While we admit the facts on which the eulogium of the present system is founded, we are constantly reminded of the fable of the Lion and the Sign.

* No man ought to be questioned for any thing he says in a hall of legislation, but when men legislate out of doors, they place themselves within the reach of animadversion. The vote to reconsider the plan of conciliation, came out a tie, yet after several of the members had left the conference, a paper was taken round among the members, and forty-five signers were engaged, and pledged to vote for a suspension of the rule for four years. The principal mover of the measure declared the fact before the conference, in defiance of argument, &c. &c.

A lion seeing a sign with a man killing a lion, painted on it, is made to say, if lions were painters, they would paint lions killing men. The societies that have wasted away and come to nothing—the little success that has attended our preaching in many places, and the places to which we are denied all access, ought not to be wholly lost sight of in this account. But orators are not prone to keep accounts of profit and loss; they are apt not only to give full credit for all success, but also in the warmth of self-love, to transfer to themselves some of the claims due to others. Glorious frontier victories and foreign conquests in civil governments, are sometimes followed by internal debility and revolutions. The greatness of nations, in the opinion of good judges, consist in internal strength, confidence, and sound principles of social liberty, &c. &c. Perhaps, too, the success in the new settlements may be in part owing to the number of Methodists who are migrating in that direction, as well as to the circumstance of the bishops having the uncontrolled choice of the presiding elders, at least the former seems to be quite as immediate a cause as the latter. Are we not bound to take into consideration the relative condition of churches in this country? The comparative degree of ministerial and religious liberty, is of the utmost importance in a competition. If our condition were the most free, it might be the subject of complacency and applause. But is it not far otherwise? Is there a man among us so blinded by self-love and prejudice, as not to perceive that the absolute and iron features of our government, are objects of general shame and scandal. The friends of liberty can see not only no shades of liberty, in our present plan of presiding eldership, but they can find no apology for it. They are lost in astonishment when they observe Americans, who are born heirs to the blood-bought inheritance of sacred liberty, voluntarily submitting to the condition of wretched slaves, and depriving themselves of the privilege of having a mere negative voice in the choice of their overseers. Ah! we have heard such like reproaches and sarcasms, till both our ears have tingled! they have preyed upon our vitals like a hectic. We have exclaimed in the feverish excitement, what infatuation has seized upon Methodist preachers! Is this state of things, this vexatious condition to be eternal! Considering that we are a new people, with little or no advantage from education, wealth, or splendid talents, it might have been

supposed, that it would have been deemed a point of first rate importance to make every part of our economy as unexceptionable as possible to an independent people, who glory in their zealous watchfulness of the principles of liberty: Not so, our spirit is too apostolic, too primitive, too tenacious of the pattern showed us on the mount, to pay any regard to such carnal and worldly considerations. We have a logic, which none of the rulers of this free people know. While they employ the whole force of genius to stop up every avenue of unlimited power, and frown with indignation upon every indication of despotism; we reason thus: The apostles chose evangelists; therefore, our bishops are apostles. The evangelists were directed to set things in order, in the absence of the apostles, and therefore, our presiding elders are evangelists. It is in our opinion of no consequence to this reasoning, that the precedent was in Crete in some newly planted churches of the Gentiles. This would be a most irresistible kind of argumentation, if it were not apt to prove too much. It could be proved in this way, that the Colossians were the presiding elders of Archippus.

But, would it not be well to abate a little of this rigor, especially among ourselves? Admitting that the duties of presiding elders are all scriptural, can they not all be attended to equally well by the presiding elders, who are conditionally within the choice of their brethren, as by those who are chosen by the bishops alone? In looking carefully over the table of duties, belonging to presiding elders, we do not perceive any part of those duties to consist in espionage; or sergeantry. Why they should withhold from the bishops any information proper for honest men to give, and receive, because the mode of their election is varied, it is difficult to conceive. But what kind of charge do the presiding elders really take of the elders, deacons, and preachers, travelling and local, in their districts? It does not become us to answer such a question. Men will no doubt differ widely in opinion in such matters. We trust we are not fastidious, nor very tenacious of little things. Our aim is higher. We wish to see our rights and privileges secured in principle, as well as practice, and the broadest base laid for mutual confidence. That we are not so singular in this respect, as some may suppose, might be made to appear, by an appeal to our history. The limitation of the presiding elders to four years in one district, was not coeval

with the order. Why may not a bishop suffer a presiding elder to preside for more than four years in one district; when he has a plenary power to remove him every year, and to alter the districts at his pleasure? Is there not some squinting of jealousy in this business? Or was there a fear lest the servants might prove too powerful for their masters single handed? However such checks on power may be introduced, if they are of apostolic authority, they are all right. To conclude, the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church have unlimited executive power. In the choice and appointment of presiding elders, and the formation of the districts, they possess the power of making the means and instruments of despotism. By the agency of presiding elders, they can manage and control the legislative and judicial departments. By the construction given to the enactments of the General Conference of 1808, the power of the bishops is not only put beyond the General Conference, but of eleven-twelfths of the annual conferences. A majority of one voice in a single annual conference enabling the bishops to retain and to exercise all their present powers, in defiance of the whole power of the rest of the travelling preachers, presiding elders always excepted, for let them be few or many, the districts can always be arranged accordingly. Surely it is time for travelling preachers to pause and reflect. O ye reformers! who believe that God's design in raising you up in America, was to reform the continent, and to spread scriptural holiness over these lands! Think you that it is God's design to bring back christianity in these lands, and to place it again under a species of papal government or power? Do not be alarmed at the name, if you are not afraid of the thing. This is a legitimate term, it means the power of a succession of fathers (so called) fortified by spontaneous constitutions, and laws confirmed by usage, and incorporated with the prejudices of education.

ADYNASIUS.

No. 2.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. i. August 16, 1821, No. x. page 151.

Animadversions on two Essays "On Church Government," published in the 8th number of this paper, and signed "A Methodist."

The number alluded to, shall furnish us with *text*. "If a member of our church shall be clearly convicted of endea-

voring to sow dissensions by inveighing against our discipline, &c." Self preservation appears to be the first law of society as well as of nature. Every community that has a lawful right to existence, has undoubtedly a right to use the means of self preservation. The only question in this case is, what means are lawful. Observe, inveighing against the discipline is not made the object of offence, but the means: a man therefore may utter censure or reproach, against the discipline, and if it cannot be clearly proved that his object is "to endeavor to sow dissensions in any of our societies," the case does not come under cognizance. The article, if I remember rightly, was introduced into the form of discipline after the separation of James O'Kelly, whose friends had endeavored to sow dissensions in the societies in this very manner. It is due however to "A Methodist," even if he errs respecting the origin and nature of the rule, to acknowledge that he is not singular in his opinions, for many believe it to be what is commonly called "a gag law!" and that it was made in the beginning, to prevent full enquiry and discussion. We have always thought otherwise; but we have not the means by us to prove which of us is in the right. It were to be wished that enactments which are predicated upon temporary and accidental circumstances, might expire by their own limitation, and not be suffered to remain like a dead letter in the discipline long after the occasion for them ceases. A man who labors to effect a change or repeal of a law or existing customs, and lives in peace with his brethren as an orderly member of society, cannot be clearly convicted of endeavoring to sow dissensions, but it must be confessed, that judges in judging of law as well as fact, may through misapprehension of its meaning, extend its penalties beyond the intentions of its original enactors. The writer of the essays, it seems could not bring himself to write upon our church government till he was heated to the *boiling point*, but this is no proof of an endeavor to sow dissension, &c. it rather argues that with all the conceived faults of the church, he loves her still. We are not displeased with his warmth—"Let the righteous smite me friendly—faithful are the wounds of a friend." If the General Conference could be clearly convicted of endeavoring to suppress free enquiry or the liberty of speech and of the press, we should think the endeavor to sow dissensions harmless in the comparison; and we should feel it to be our indispensable duty to use every means in our pow-

er to disqualify them from "persisting in such pernicious practices."

WESLEY, COKE, and ASBURY, &c. are the next points in the text to which we turn our attention. And we take the liberty to say, that we felicitate ourselves in the consciousness, that for thirty years, whenever we have had occasion to think or to speak of the principles or practices of those venerable men, either in their presence or absence, we have thought and spoke above the influence of fear or favour. We are conscious too, of an inclination and effort to analyze their character more critically, than if our relation to them had been less intimate. They certainly never suspected us of a disposition to become their flatterers. There was a time when we were slow of heart to believe in the sincerity of Mr. Wesley's confessions of his lack of theory, or in other words, his attributing so many of his plans to accident; but we have long since felt no doubt on that score, and now think that few men ever lived of the same natural and acquired abilities, who was less of a political theorist. There are two kinds of theorists—one kind theorise in anticipation, the other upon facts or experiments. The former are called projectors, and the latter practical. Mr. Wesley, as it related to religious government or polity, excelled in neither of these respects; but nevertheless, it may have accidentally happened that the plan he adopted for the new church in this country approached nearer to practicability, than if he had attempted to give us a theory. It would be next to miraculous, if the most profound European theorist could strike out a plan of church government best suited to the character and conditions of Americans. All the men who were to become the immediate agents in the new order of things had been formed under the régime of the old school. They had seen nothing, and heard little else, but the discipline of the Methodist societies as members of the national church of England. This was certainly small stock to begin an independent church government. Could they have gone to other independent churches in this country to obtain loans? The new church we are inclined to think did better with its old experience than it would have done with a new theory, for the more perfect such theory might have been, the fewer would have immediately understood it or knew how to reduce it into practice. The only real cause of complaint that we have, all things considered, is, perhaps, that while

our church rulers and legislators have remained almost as destitute of theory as our great founder, they possess none of his capacity to profit by facts. May we not safely affirm, that the man who was led by accident to employ lay preachers, to form classes, and many other things, in the same accidental way, might have been led to make many accommodating changes in this independent church government in this new world? Yes we verily believe that the man, who could perceive the nature and excellence of experimental religion, in his fellow passengers on board a ship, and be thereby induced to perform a journey to Hernhurth to acquire a more perfect knowledge of it, would by this time, had he lived among us, have learned from the trees of the forest or the beasts of the field, or by some other means, that the freest form of church government in the United States, is most subservient to the interests of true religion. Of Dr. Coke we can say nothing, as it relates to this country, as he cannot be considered even as a bird of passage, for he never stayed long enough among us at any one time to hatch a brood; but we can say that we wished it, and sought by private entreaties and other means to effect it. Now concerning the father of us all—The fault of his habits rendered the fault of his nature or rather the virtue of his nature a fault. Mr. Wesley went over in a year a circuit about a little island or two, and therefore he must needs encompass a continent. The one went from town to town, and therefore the other must go from wilderness to wilderness; and thus did he stretch and strain himself not only beyond another man's line of things but beyond all human bounds and measures: Such over doing ought not to be called imitation. There was nothing in this world he so much dreaded as a preacher who was not always in motion. The natural and unavoidable consequences of such a boundless system of itinerating are, that the private members and class leaders know more about the internal state of a society, than a circuit preacher, a circuit preacher than a presiding elder, a presiding elder than a bishop; and that in the course of a few years, he that has the oversight of all, becomes an almost universal stranger to every thing and every body; but while preachers are thus deprived of leisure to theorise, and of opportunities to acquire practical knowledge, power remains stationary in their hands. The preacher gets his information from the leader, the presiding elder from the preacher, and the bishop from the presiding elder. Does

the light of knowledge suffer no deflection, no decomposition, nor imbibe any coloring in its passage through so many bodies? Does it grow clearer and finally lose all the foreign particles that might have been originally mixed with it?—What is spoken in the text “to the shame of majorities” grows out of this itinerant legislation run mad—this fatal segregation of knowledge from power. Presiding elders who have almost literally lived for four years in the wilderness, come to General Conference to legislate for thousands whom they never knew, and with whose condition they can feel no sympathy. Is it wonderful that men so situated, so entirely cut off from all intercourse with the great body of the connection, who it may be, imbibe almost all their ideas and impressions through those who feel an interest in all they speak and write on matters of discipline. Is it wonderful, or rather would it not be passing strange, if men so circumstanced could legislate for the good of the whole! If the majority of the General Conference could be composed of men who best knew the people and are best known by them, the people would still have a right to complain of the present mode of their election; but we do not think they need to fear. What our church has most to dread, is the ignorance of the many, and the prejudice of the few. To hear and see preachers brow beating and voting down those in General Conference, whose only aim is to curb power and to diffuse knowledge, as enemies to Methodism and innovators who aim to destroy the travelling plan, is very painful to our feelings. If report say true, the frontier preachers and some others who were opposed at the last General Conference to the election of presiding elders, are in the habit of representing the other moiety of the General Conference, as the common enemies of the travelling plan. Let those whose duty it is to see that these men behave well, and to call them to account for “improper words,” look to the consequence. Will not such grievous words stir up strife? This is more like slander than argument; it neither confutes nor establishes any principle. How much more correct would it be for the larger number of these strangers and pilgrims, to acknowledge, that they know next to nothing of such matters, that they have had neither time, place, nor opportunity for the acquisition of theory or practice.

No. 3.

Vol. I. October 12, 1831, No. xiv. page 211.

Reflections on the History of Methodism.

To purify a system of doctrine from all grounds and sources of speculative Antinomianism, and to retain the doctrine of justification by faith alone in the day of conversion—to preserve the principles of experimental religion, and to avoid mysticism, was a task to which none but the genius of Wesley seems to have been fully competent. This extraordinary man not only exhibited a system of doctrine new in the above respects in its combinations and associations, having no exact model among the writings of theologians; but he purified his society from speculative and practical antinomianism and from mysticism also, and by the aid of unordained preachers extended and enlarged it, and left at his death means and instruments sufficient to render it commensurate with the habitable earth. The separation of the Moravians, and of Mr. Whitefield and his followers, were critical and eventful eras in the history of Methodism, and presented difficulties which must have overwhelmed any but first rate talents for doctrine and government. The manner of the Moravians at that period in England—the number of the primitive Methodist society who had imbibed their smooth, easy, and quiet plan of explaining the gospel, and reducing it to practice, when the hour of segregation arrived, produced a fearful diminution of their members, and opposed an influence diametrically opposite to the Wesleyan economy, which nothing but time and unwearied labor could overcome. On the other hand the advantages of Mr. Whitefield were great indeed, and sufficient to appall a mind of no ordinary fortitude. The conversion of such a colleague into a rival, for a time well nigh eclipsed the rising importance of Wesley and his small and feeble band of followers. The calvinistic form in which Mr. Whitefield announced his doctrines, was congenial to the opinions of a number in the establishment; to most of the dissenters; and to the presbyterians and congregationalists, in Scotland, Ireland, and the then provinces in North America. His popularity in the pulpit was unrivalled, and in zeal and diligence he was not a whit behind his indefatigable rival in doctrine himself. The wealth and the learning which he enlisted in his cause, enabled him to give

a dignity and consequence to the majority of his preachers to vie with the clergy (as they are called) which they seldom omitted in outward appearances or intellectual exercises. Meanwhile the roots and the seeds of the decrees were well nigh eradicated and extracted from the Wesleyan societies; the ordained and unordained preachers and the private members began to see eye to eye and to think and speak the same thing. The employment of lay preachers (so called) in the judgment of every body but their patron was sufficient to ruin his cause. How desperate! how mad! must the attempt have appeared, to make head against a kingdom of opponents with such raw and undrilled recruits. But the members of the establishment at length beheld with amazement the progress of Wesleyan Methodism; they were perplexed and confounded at the ground its intrepid leader had taken in renouncing all affinity to seceders, and proclaiming himself and his proselytes as members of the national church. It is our business said he not to show how fallen the church is, but how fallen its members themselves are. The days of persecution had gone by; in vain did the zealous members of the establishment exert all their learning and ingenuity to free the body and the branches of the church from this parasitical plant, as they considered Methodism, and prevent it from twining around its trunk and feeding upon its substance. What could be done with men who would neither expatriate nor unchurch themselves in order to become religious? The sword had grown rusty in its scabbard, and could not be withdrawn; with them ridicule was no test of truth; and as far as arguments are concerned, they took the liberty to judge that the advantage was on their side. Any attempt to out do them in zeal was utterly hopeless. To buy them in, was equally out of the question, for, if a price could have been bidden for their preachers, there was no place to employ them. The unordained preachers, with fewer exceptions than might have been expected, maintained themselves in the confidence and affection of their patron and of the societies. An unusual number of them lived to a good old age, and died in the fulness of faith and hope. The government of their chief was patriarchal and monarchical; his ruling maxim was, "if you do not help me as I direct, you shall not help me at all;" but these directions were early reduced to the form of written laws or statutes. He divided the preachers into assistants and helpers; the former of whom were the

executive, and the latter graduates. All met together once a year in conference, and were organized as a deliberative body. The assistants were all equal among themselves, there was no room therefore for any strife among them who should be the greatest.

One hundred of these assistants were named in Mr. Wesley's will, as the conference; and on them and their successors the government and the property of the connexion devolved. Among the missionaries to this country, there was a general assistant who had the power of a legate or lieutenant; but the rest were neither remarkable for their subordination, nor for the caution and delicacy of their expressions of opinion. It was in this country, that the preachers first began to meet in separate conferences, and the custom is still maintained. This to be sure was a necessary evil, which we may deplore but cannot remedy. An itinerant executive moving from conference to conference, possesses means of managing and controlling, which Mr. Wesley never possessed, and which no man, who like him always meets the same men all together, can ever possess. For some years these annual conferences possessed legislative power, and could be increased or diminished at the pleasure of the executive, who also had a control over the length of the time of their sitting. It was during this peculiar economy that presiding elders came into existence among us, but the precise time and manner of their origin seems to be involved in some obscurity. The rise of this order first destroyed the equality among the assistants, and placed the executive head at such a distance from them, that they could have no immediate access to it—communications were thenceforward to be made and received through those ministers. An attempt to convert a certain number of these officers into a legislative council, led to a General Conference, and this in turn to a delegated conference. It must be apparent to every observer, that our affairs were managed differently from those of the English connexion during the life time of Mr. Wesley. A bishop among us at this present time, though the legislative power is taken from the annual conferences, can render them subservient to almost any purpose his ambition and ingenuity may devise. He may oppose the influence of the annual conferences to the General Conference, and thus produce compliance in the latter. He may so construe the laws as by a vote of the annual conferences to change their original destina-

tion or render them null and void, &c. &c. What a fruitful source of reflection does the following contrasts furnish. In this country for a length of time, several separate bodies of preachers made laws for the whole community with no other means of correspondence than the executive voluntarily furnished them. In England all the assistants sat together in conference on a footing of equality, and Mr. Wesley was immediately accessible to them all; he had no irresponsible privy council to play at "Boo peep, or hide and go seek," and such like pranks of power. But among us, elders must have presiding elders, over whom they have no control, betwixt them and their bishop. Does this part of our history contribute in any measure to throw light upon the interesting question which has been so often asked. How was it possible that a colossal power calculated to fill a contemplative mind with wonder should establish itself among a people so naturally jealous of civil and religious liberty as Americans are known to be?

We have already hinted at the uncommon weight of age and experience in the British connexion. It must have been a sight as interesting as novel, to have seen the venerable Wesley at the age of fourscore, surrounded in conference by numbers in advance of sixty and seventy. Those were the first fruits of unordained preachers. In this country it was far otherwise; causes had conspired to produce strange changes. At the age of seventy Mr. Asbury could scarcely recognize half a dozen of the primitive American preachers in the conferences. Poverty and location had anticipated death, and not a few were ministerially dead while they lived. Rapid changes and a succession of young men have contributed to unsettle the affections and foster the spirit of novelty among us in a degree unknown in any other church. Another point of contrast between the two connexions worthy of notice is, our ministerial fruitfulness has been mostly in numbers—theirs in talent.

It is not for us to know the times and the seasons or to foresee events; but when rumors of discontent are heard from some and the apprehension of division from others, particularly the latter, they call forth and they fix our attention upon the interesting subject of the means best calculated to secure union and church rights. We do not think that divisions are never justifiable; on the contrary, we believe they are always so from professed churches which become persecutors. The voice of God ever calls his people to

come out of bloody Babylon. Other cases might perhaps be pointed out; but it is deserving of the most serious regard, that division, though the first remedy that generally suggests itself to those who think themselves aggrieved in a religious community, is a remedy greatly to be distrusted. It is a means not only liable to great abuse, but may prove infinitely dangerous to those who have recourse to it. The history of those divisions which became necessary from imperious circumstances, proves the dangers and difficulties to which they expose those who participate in them. A signal of division never fails to call forth and place in marshal array all the most hurtful passions of the human heart. The example of Wesley shews what may be done under the protection of the civil laws, or while the demon of persecution is in chains as among ourselves, without having recourse to division. And can any human example recommend itself more strongly to us than his? The first thing that must strike us all in his religious movements is, that his religion had no passion, and his success abundantly demonstrates that passion is by no means necessary to success in religious undertaking. It seems to us to be beyond all doubt, that it is fully in the power of our church, if it should be so disposed, to reclaim and secure to itself any right or privilege which is now exclusively in the hands of the travelling preachers, without having recourse to the spirit or practice of division; and of course without passion, and also without violating any law or exposing itself to the penalties of any one that the General Conference can enforce.

PHILO PISTICUS.

No. 4.

Wesleyan Repository vol. I. October 25, 1821. No. xv. page 248.

The present state of things.

It was a singular and perhaps a providential circumstance, that the General Conference was equally divided on the motion to suspend "the reconciliation" for four years. An event so unlikely on so momentous a question, was certainly well calculated to teach moderation to both parties; but so it seemed not to the managing spirits. The alarum was sounded, the constitution is violated—and forty-five votes were pledged beyond the doors of the conference and redeemed within

them—thus was the conciliatory propositions of the second bishop; the solemn agreement of a committee of equal numbers from both sides; the votes of more than two-thirds of the General Conference; the expression of satisfaction and tears of joy, &c. all thrown to the winds: and the peace and harmony of the preachers, if not their final union, put in jeopardy for the sake of gaining four years to electioneer through the annual conferences. Scarcely had the preachers returned to their circuits, before it began to be rumored that the motives and the moral integrity of one-half the travelling preachers, or at least of their representatives was questionable. The friends of the sole power of the bishops to choose presiding elders, whispered about (as we hear) that the preachers in the north and east, and a certain number in the Baltimore Conference, aimed to destroy the itinerancy and introduce congregationalism, &c. We may just remark in passing that our plan, and the congregational plan, are the two extremes in church government. In ours, all the power is in the hands of the bishops and preachers—in theirs, in the people. If we must believe those preachers to be sincere who can propagate such suspicions against their brethren, we cannot believe that their understandings are equal to their sincerity. How terrible must the imaginations of men be alarmed by fears, who in despite of every evidence which the nature of the case can furnish, conjure up images of the most extreme ideal danger. If they really believed that those preachers aim at more than they profess, why not believe that they aim at some modification of our episcopacy. Men who were contending for their rights, when they gave up principles, dear to every lover of religious liberty, should have been promptly met by those who were required to give up almost nothing; but all terms are not only refused them; their honesty and veracity is held up in their absence in more than doubtful character. Those who think they do God service by propagating their own suspicions against their brethren, may remain blind to the consequences, but to us who take no part in this election campaign of four years long, and have no immediate interests in the issue, it is plain that they are making a schism among travelling preachers, and are using the very means to render it incurable. Who can have any confidence in any proposed plans of reconciliation, who remembers what was the fate of that of 1820? It was an awful and portentous hour that fixed the character of "true breakers" upon for-

ty-five members of the General Conference. But though the present mode of proceeding is calculated to destroy all our hopes of a restoration of mutual confidence among travelling preachers, yet, in our opinion, the spell which had suspended free inquiry is dissolved forever, and every year will give rise to new doubts respecting the wisdom of the organization of our hierarchy. But whoever may have the majority in the next General Conference, we think it can easily be foreseen, that the people will not be suffered to remain neutral, for, though they will not be permitted to touch the hem of the garments of *the powers that be*, they will add too much to the pomp and grace of the triumph to be left out of the train.

The probability is, that there will be no reconciliation among the preachers at the next General Conference. We may calculate therefore, that the defeated party will come among us, not like the conquered bull in the fable among the frogs in the marsh, to tread us to death, but to seek our sympathy. In such an event, the members of the church will no longer have to tell the story of their complaints to a deaf man. On some future occasion we may essay something in the form of a memorial by way of anticipation. In the meanwhile we think it very advisable that brethren should be wary of taking sides with those of any party who are contending for themselves, and for themselves only.

P. P.

No. 5.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. i. November 23, 1821, No. xvii. page 278.

The state of our affairs.

Patch work is very pretty in bed quilts, and divers other kinds of furniture; but in matters touching the *rights* of the church, it has somewhat of a disagreeable effect. In looking over our "articles of religion," we find that "the visible church of Christ" is a "congregation of faithful men;" and that "every particular church may ordain, change, or abolish, rites and ceremonies, &c." The Methodists, in the United States, are a congregation (it is to be hoped) of faithful men; may they by themselves, or their representatives, ordain, change, or abolish, any rights or ceremonies? Have they ever had the power, or the privi-

lege to do such things, under any existing principle, constitution, law, or rule among us? What would be the consequence, if this congregation of faithful men (not of preachers) should proceed to act upon the 22nd article, but "so that nothing should be ordained against God's word?"

A certain writer by the name of King, convinced Mr. Wesley, by some account of the primitive church, that bishops and presbyters were so nearly alike, that the latter might ordain the former: but Mr. Wesley's letters did not convince Mr. Asbury of his right to be ordained, before a certain number of preachers should elect him, and when this was done, he was convinced, that he, and all his successors, so elected, had a right to oversee the spiritual and temporal affairs of the church, and to exercise all other rights of sovereignty, without the interference of laymen; to the end of time. The *convincements* of those apostolic men, in these instances, were in unusually small parcels. Where were the congregations of faithful men all this while, who may ordain rites; and of course their own *rights*? Is it not a pity, that Mr. King, or somebody else, could have convinced the venerable presbyter of the church of England, that there was some body else in the primitive church besides bishops and elders, and some other rights, also, besides the right of ordination? And is it not still more to be lamented, that Mr. Asbury who refused to be ordained under the authority of Mr. Wesley, without the suffrages of American Methodist preachers, had not taken other liberties with the authority of his venerated principal, and considered the right of suffrage beyond the narrow limits of a conference; but the collection of preachers in Lovely Lane, was all the world to him, and he to them. These shreds and patches of conviction, when they were all put together, served only like Joseph's coat, to betray the impartial affections. "*The diversity of countries, times, and men's manners,*" which the article says may authorise changes; did not appear sufficient in the judgment of this assembly of American preachers, though citizens, to authorise them to make any provision for the religious rights of their countrymen; though but a year or two before acknowledged by the king of Great Britain, &c. as a free, sovereign, and independent people. The church—the congregation of faithful men—the Methodists, were left as utterly destitute of every principle of religious liberty, as it was possible for them to be. No period of time, no accu-

mulation of members, no future of circumstances were anticipated, which might lead to a representative legislature, or the intervention of the voice of the church, directly, or indirectly, in ordaining, changing, or abolishing, rites and ceremonies, &c. &c. As it respected the want of power, the church remained in *statu quo* until 1800, when an attempt was made to give its members the right to be judged by their peers. This bill, after being detained in the General Conference, in order to attach a tail, or supplementary clause to it, by which the preacher might move the cause to the quarterly meeting conference, by way of appeal, if he did not approve of the decision of the jury, finally passed. In 1808 the state of our affairs became like the laws of the Medes and Persians, which alter not. Several of our worthy, and aged preachers sighed in heart felt concern over the danger to which the church was liable, of having new terms of communion imposed upon her, by the unlimited power of the General Conference; and a constitution was got up, by which, the rights of trial, and appeal, of our members, was secured as with a chain of adamant, as will appear from the following extract. "Neither shall they (the General Conferences) do away the privilege of our members of trial before the society, or a committee, and of an appeal. Provided, nevertheless, that upon the joint recommendation of all the annual conferences, the majority of two-thirds of the General Conference succeeding, shall suffice to alter any of the above restrictions:" and what would our members do then! The gravity with which these matters are put forth into the world, and addressed to the members of the church, prove, if other proofs were wanting, that our divine, and inherent, and *ex officio* legislature, are unimpeachable on the score of sincerity. "Far from wishing you," say the bishops, "to be ignorant of any part of our discipline, we desire you to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the whole." Unreasonable desire; rather leave us in happy ignorance; let us know nothing, that we may fear nothing. How is it possible for an American stomach, after reading, marking and learning the contents of the book of discipline, to digest it? Is there one jot or tittle of the pabulum of ecclesiastical liberty to be found in its pages? In what religious society or church in the whole world, or in the records of history, can an example of a more systematic exclusion of private members from all participation in social and religious rights be found? O! ye who have

bound our wills as fast as fate, in your wisdom and goodness you took it upon yourselves gratuitously to make a constitution, as you call it, and as if to hold us up to the ridicule of every body, you make a proviso, that a certain number of you must agree upon the measure, before you will do away the privileges of your members. Did you never know a body of preachers called clergymen, who could agree to the full proportional amount mentioned in your proviso, to do away, and to keep away, the privileges of the people? How could you lose the recollection of the great practical maxims of the school of freedom, in which you have been educated, that tyranny consists in undivided, unlimited, and uncontrollable power, in the hands of any number of men, as well as in the hand of a single individual. As preachers, you have one set of interests, and we as members of the church, have another. What sympathy can a thousand of you, any more than one, feel in our privation, when all the power you abstract from us, you add to yourselves?

The body of faithful men, who are not travelling preachers, in the present state of our affairs, are mere cyphers, entirely passive to legislative control; and if the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, should amount to as many millions as they do now to thousands, the unlimited prerogative of the General Conference would still exist, and must remain forever, all the talk in the 22nd article to the contrary notwithstanding. The whole consequence of the Methodist Episcopal Church, consists in having the word of God preached, and the sacraments administered in it; but if the preachers should agree to introduce "transubstantiation" and "deny the cup to the *lay people*" no provision is made for "the *lay people*" to help themselves. Was this tautology "the *lay people*" placed in the 19th article by an oversight? or is it a vestige of Romish, or reformed barbarism, squinting towards a convenient introduction in due time of "the clergy and the laity;" but this by the by. The state of our affairs in theory, and in practice, is plainly, as here set forth, without any inclination, or intention to exaggerate, or extenuate it. We have no legislative power; but have we, therefore, no legislative rights? As men, and as christians, our rights may be neglected by ourselves, or suspended by others; but they can never be destroyed, while the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ remains. If so, are we not

bound in conscience to separate and reduce our rights into practice? We say not so! Observe if all the members of the church were determined to exercise their rights, there could be no division, no separation; but if an hundred, or a thousand, or any other number, do separate, they dissolve their social and religious relation to all that remain, and of course from that time the members of the church cannot view them in any other light than any other separate society or church. Men who are resolved to be so selfish, as to regard only their own rights, may and will do as they please; but those who feel the social ties, and act from principle, will consult the rights and interest of the whole church. It is owing to the existence and influence of this generous, and liberal feeling, that we find among the greatest and best of the reformers, so much reluctance to separate; so many attempts to conciliate, even in cases vitally affecting matters of doctrine and conscience. They foresaw, that from the time they should take an independent stand, an offensive, and defensive war, must commence. The friends, and advocates of the rights of the church, who still remain in fellowship, can view those who have separated even on the same account, rather as deserters from the common cause, than as friends; and, indeed it is evident, that in so far as the influence of the principles of liberty depend upon their progress, and the accumulation of members in a community, the separation of its professed friends may be injurious to its final prevalence. But in two of the instances at least, in which separations have taken place, we know that the separatists were not in the first instance, even professedly guided by principle; the leaders were actuated by personal motives and considerations. The after thoughts of such men, however correct they may be, cannot be viewed in any other light, than as the result of necessity; in heart they must appear selfish. We have another, and still stronger reason in the present state of things, against separating in order to secure an immediate exercise of personal rights, and that is, the interest of experimental religion, which in party contention, and the spirit of proselytism, that is almost unavoidable in such an event, is generally neglected, if not directly injured. Instead, therefore, of giving occasion to the friends of the exclusive power of the preachers, to say, that a discussion of principles leads to divisions, the members of the church, by their union, and perseverance, should excite very different fears

—fears, that by their union and perseverance, they must finally succeed in securing their rights. Though we have no more doubt of the sincerity of most of the travelling preachers, than we have of our own—though we are persuaded, that they think, they render to God a most essential service, by holding the power to legislate exclusively for the church; yet we cannot persuade ourselves to believe, but, that, if they ever come to find, that a large majority of the people, WILL to exercise their own rights, that it must lead to inquiry, and of course, to a considerable change of opinion. At this moment, it is more than probable, that the ignorance, or inattention of the members of the church, to the true principles of ecclesiastical legislation, has a paralyzing influence on no inconsiderable number of the preachers. The disposition to help those, who help themselves, is as universal, as any other. What would be the consequence, if we should leave the interests of our souls, as much to the preachers, as we do the law making power in the church? Our own watchfulness, is quite consistent with their watching over our interests. We must give an account for ourselves, as well as they for us. How do those christians answer for it, who suffered, or assisted, their preachers to gain, and secure to themselves, anciently, those unlimited prerogatives, which we believe, that they have so shamefully abused. If our judgments are not made up, we can think, and examine, and judge for ourselves while in membership; and if they are, we can do abundantly more towards instructing our brethren, than by separating from them. We are bound then, by the love of religious liberty, as much as by the love of the brethren, not to separate, and we cannot be driven away, or excommunicated yet awhile, as long as we walk worthy of the gospel. The time is not yet come, to make a man an offender for a word, or to hang him for his thoughts. We want to make proselytes to principle, to continue in the church, not to forsake it.

ADYNASIUS.

No. 6.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. i. December 20, 1821, No. xviii. page 269.

On Church Freedom.

"If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

We do not remember to have seen a discourse on this explicit declaration of the origin, and positive nature of religious freedom, in which its social, as well as individual bearing is brought fairly into view. The commentators and the preachers mostly treat of it in reference to experimental religion, as a freedom from the guilt, the power, and the principles of sin; and it is certain, that he who is under the power of either of these, is not morally or religiously free indeed. Upon this plan the nature of church freedom is seldom brought under consideration; but the difference between private and social freedom is of importance, and involves consequences of the most interesting nature. If, as is generally believed, Jesus Christ intended that his disciples and followers should exist together in a social state as fellow subjects of his kingdom, or members of his church, we cannot forbear the inquiry, whether he meant that they should be socially free indeed, or whether they should pass under the yoke to ecclesiastical masters. As such masters are not fond to be called by their right names, it is probable that no one will be forward to assert, that this latter condition of the church, is agreeable to the will of its founder. Should any one, however, be found bold enough to attempt to father either the principles, or the practices of religious bondage in the church, upon the authority of Jesus Christ, we hold that he may be effectually refuted by these words, "If the son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed," for they imply no doubt of his readiness and willingness to make us free; but of our acceptance of his glorious and substantial freedom. Let us enquire into the nature of church freedom, as distinct from personal and civil freedom, for it is evident that neither of the latter necessarily involve the former. The very essence of church freedom, consists in having a voice personally, or by our representatives, in and over the laws by which we are to be governed, and in being judged by our peers. If one man or any set of men, who have no dependence upon the church or legislative responsibility to it, may or can make its laws, it has not the shadow of freedom any more than the substance; all church

powers and privileges are thus cut off at their fountain head. Nor would the church be at all benefited, if the by-laws and written forms were dispensed with, and all church proceedings referred to the letter of the New Testament, if men of the same irresponsibility were to be interpreters and executors of the sacred authority; the danger on the contrary would be increased, as without precedents they might add caprice to injustice. It is certain, that the letter of no institution can execute itself, and it would be an idle waste of time to attempt to prove that implicit confidence in men with absolute power, is utterly fallacious. There is not a man living, who can foresee how power will effect him before he make the trial, and it is well known how often the most sagacious judges of human nature, are disappointed in their anticipations of religious as well as civil officers. Judges of courts of justice, who are made as independent as possible of other branches of civil government, are only appointed during good behaviour, but such a latitude is found to be by no means safe in the office of law makers; those who are invested with the legislative authority in free communities, are held under the perpetual responsibility of periodical elections. The priestcraft of which we have heard reiterated complaints, is nothing more than a modification of human ambition, or a vice of nature converted into a vice of office. It is seldom if ever, that we find on the pages of ecclesiastical history, a fair and correct development of the principles of social freedom. The struggle between the great contending parties, when the priesthood was concerned, was, who should be the greatest, not how powers should be equalized and balanced. When violence and force were resorted to, it was natural, and indeed unavoidable, for the weaker party to have recourse to artifice. The boasted advantages of separating the church from the state, are neutralized to the members of the latter; if there is no balance of power between them and their officers; and it may also happen, that their condition may be thus changed for the worse; as the political power may have an interest in protecting the church from the unlimited influence of the priesthood, though it must be confessed that they have most frequently combined their force, and made the people a common prey. We do not profess to be competent judges of the actual state of religious freedom among other denominations in our country, but if we may trust to appearances we should be led to conjecture, that in some in-

stances, where the greatest zeal for liberty is expressed, the check giving principles are either not well understood or steadily carried into practical operation. The reformers themselves seem not to have understood the principles of church freedom as well as the founders of our republic did those of civil freedom. Though nothing can be more hostile to our views and feelings than a union of church and state, yet as human nature is the same, and, like gravity, acts by uniform laws, we are fully persuaded that any means which are found, on experiment, sufficient to check and control the natural ambition of the human heart in one case, has strong claims to our attention in the other. As the American doctrine, that tyranny consists in undivided power being in the same hands, is as fully demonstrated by the priestcraft of ecclesiastical history, as the kingcraft and aristocratical policy of civil history, why may not the converse of the case hold true. Men who have the same interests will be prone to act alike; and as long as they perceive that their interests are mutual, they will act together. It would be a miracle, that is, an event contrary to the course of nature, if either priests or preachers, with the legislative and executive power of the church in their own hands, should not manage the interests of others, so as to promote their own. The security of a church against the tyranny of its own officers is out of the question, so long as its members remain ignorant of, or inattentive to those constitutional principles, on whose reaction the health of social, as well as natural bodies depend. The causes and effects of a fever in the human body are in many points analogous to tyranny in the body social. Both proceed from some derangement in the parts and powers of the system, and both by an excess of circulation to the head, if not corrected, eventuate in death. Ambition, as we have said, is like gravity, and can only be overcome by opposing force to force, and resistance to resistance. If the interests of the church could be placed upon one end of a beam or lever, and the interests of priests or preachers at the other, though the former might be much the more weighty, yet the balancing of the two would not depend upon that circumstance, but upon the position of the rest or fulcrum. There is not, nor can there be, a form of religious government devised, that may not become tyrannical by deranging the balance of power; and this we conceive to be the reason why the scriptures are so silent upon the forms and modes of church

government, and also why so little has been gained by changing its modes and names, in order to bring it more near to the scripture plan. The eagerness with which some men search for precedents of religious governments, seems to us to be of no more importance than that of a mechanic, who ransacks every country, in order to find models for steel-yards, or should prefer the ancient Roman one to any other. No model would be of any use, if he should not know how to construct this kind of balance scientifically, or by experiment. The tenacity with which the different denominations cleave to their different modes of government on account of their supposed conformity to the primitive church government, betrays a want of science and a neglect of experiment. Among the churches which have adopted the episcopal form, there are no two who have given the same division of power to their episcopal officers; and an indefinite number more might differ among themselves, and from all the rest. The same thing might happen to a presbyterian, or congregational, or any form of government, and probably has happened. If any one will prove to us that the primitive church was not free indeed, we can prove that it is no precedent for us, and that in this respect we ought not to follow its example. Any government which is founded on principles, which secure to the preachers and the members of the church their mutual rights and privileges, is scriptural enough for our faith and practice. Is it not remarkable that the American people who have a government *sui generis* of their own originating and making, should be so tenacious of the religious polity of the European churches from which their ancestors sprung? Could this difference in the influence of the prejudice of education have existed, if the principles of religious government were as well understood as those of civil liberty? We are inclined to think that much of the asperity which exists among different sects, is to be traced to the want of some guiding and directing principle, which though it might direct men through different roads, could hardly fail, if steadily followed, to conduct them to the same end. Our church which has neither legislative voice nor will, with the millstone of the absolute power of the preachers about her neck, can never see the pleasant light, or breathe the vital air of freedom. The waves and billows of despotic government must roll eternally over her head, unless by some means she can extricate herself from this dead weight.

ADYNASIUS.

No. 7.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. i. December 20th, 1831, No. xix. page 299.

Methodist History—Letters to a Young Preacher, No. II.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND :

In every collection of men, who exist in community, or social relation, all the diversity of the human character may be expected to disclose itself, and some leading principle, either by art or accident, to modify and direct the whole. As the young men began to be advanced to the executive offices, it was interesting to observe, how the influence of power operated upon the minds of some, in transforming the simple loving brother into a man of consequence; and how the presiding genius selected and moulded the subordinate agents and ministers of discipline. Though nothing, or next to nothing, was attempted in a way of instruction, so as to make the elder preachers the teachers of the younger ones; yet no preacher of any grade or station was ever left a day without a superior. The principles and the germs of a hierarchy were thus incorporated in the very foundation of our primitive existence. Instances are not wanting, in our recollection of early times, of high handed measures over inferior preachers and societies, which would not now be attempted, and if attempted, not submitted to; such as suspending preachers, and tearing class papers, &c. The dictatorial manner in which some of these seconds and thirds in command ruled, furnishes melancholy evidence of the tendency of undefined power to supplant brotherly love; and proves undeniably, that in our church there is no place to extol the primitive liberties. The choice of all executive men was then, as now, exclusively in the hands of the supreme head. The principles of the hierarchy, as they were constituted in 1784, were, with a steady and undeviating hand, carried into practice, and guarded with the utmost vigilance. The primitive Methodist preachers transmitted to us what they themselves possessed, with the single exception of trying and excluding members without the judgment of the church. They had the legislative and executive power solely in their own hands. I trust you will agree with me, that more learning and less power would have been better for them, better adapted to the genius of the American people, and to the prosperity and happiness of the church. But you will bear in mind, that in those times the principles of

social freedom were seldom the subject of patient closet investigation, where alone they can be fairly investigated; and that there was no ground for those to stand upon, who understood them, (if such there were) from which they could propagate them among the preachers or the people. The disastrous division in Virginia savored more at first of a strife for the mastery than a fair and correct discussion of social rights. The leader of it, while a presiding elder, was considered among the most rigid of that class of officers; and like most men of irascible tempers, and indistinct views, in the progress of his struggles and disappointments, seems to have yielded himself up to the influence of the most desperate prejudices. There was a crisis in the public mind, which I cannot but think, that if he had possessed a head sufficiently clear, to have seized upon, and held up to the view of the people the true principles of social liberty, would have insured him success. This chapter in our earlier history ought to be an everlasting monument to warn all of the danger of building, or attempting to support, a church upon any but the broadest foundation of the abstract principles of social rights. It is only when they are generally and correctly understood, that the ambition of half-informed little masters can be effectually repressed, and the people kept contented under the influence of discipline.

In attempting to give you some idea of individuals, I may not omit the peculiar characteristics of some of the English preachers. Mr. Rankin was a pattern of neatness and preciseness in the minutiae of manners; and was equally attentive to the manners of others. Every day his large white wig was carefully adjusted and powdered, and every particle of dust and down carefully brushed from his clothes. A young American preacher sitting in a lolling posture at table with his chair leaning back, Mr. Rankin rose, and in the presence of the company adjusted the chair, and the position of the occupant, adding at the same time a suitable admonition, &c. Mr. Asbury considered Mr. Rankin in the light of an opponent, and it is certain, that if there were any dependence to be placed in the correspondence of his English friend, Mr. Rankin did use all his influence with Mr. Wesley to have him recalled. Mr. Asbury was informed, that when the news arrived, that Mr. Wesley's name was left off the American minutes, Mr. Rankin who was present, without waiting for the evidence, exclaimed,

"That's Frank Asbury's doings," &c. It is due to the memory of Mr. Rankin to say, that during his short stay in this country he conciliated the affections of several of the preachers, if not all.

Mr. Whatcoat, though among the last in the order of time, was not among the least. "His life," as a pious young lady used to say, who was competent to judge, "was like an even spun thread." He had a second suit of natural hair, which did not grow grey till late in life, and he never lost entirely his European color, his features were small, and his countenance smooth and placid. In his neat, plain, parson's grey, after returning from the devotions of the closet, a painter or a statuary might have taken him as a model for a representation of piety. The mild, the complacent, and the dignified, were so happily blended in his looks, as to fill the beholder with reverence and love. His speech was somewhat slow and drawling; but not disagreeable after a little; his excellent matter came so warm from the heart, that a genial spirit of devotion never failed to kindle and blaze afresh, under its sounds, his very appearance in the pulpit did his hearers good. His arrangement and expression were uncommonly clear and perspicuous. He preached more frequently from the Old Testament than any preacher I ever remember to have heard. It was delightful to hear him in his best mood upon, "But the word of the Lord is not bound"—never was the truth of an assertion more fully verified by the hearer's feelings. But above all, pre-eminent, as a star of the first magnitude, shone Francis Asbury. In him were concentrated the directing mind and the animating soul, necessary to direct and move the whole body. Had he comprehended the principles of social freedom, as well as he did those of the gospel, and have directed the mighty energies of his mind to make the preachers as studious as laborious, to what a pitch of greatness would this one man have raised the Methodist cause in this country! There was one point in which this chief man in our Israel challenges universal admiration, and that was the impulse which he gave to experimental and practical religion. It is impossible for the most able of his admirers to convey, to those who knew not the man, and his communication, any adequate conception of his virtue inspiring and virtue animating influence over the minds of the preachers. I do think, that the whole of ecclesiastical history may be challenged, to produce so many men brought

together in so short a time, without the benefit of any previous regular religious education, whose lives and conversation were generally more becoming the gospel. A few instances of those who were converted from notoriously wicked courses becoming preachers, and a still fewer number of apostates, have induced some, whose learning and standing in society ought to have secured them from such mistaken conceptions, to hold up the Methodist preachers as a mere reprobate race; whereas, as I have said in a former letter, the great proportion of the primitive preachers, especially natives of this country, were young men, the fruit of revivals, but little practiced in the schools of vice. On a certain occasion, while the work was so rapidly progressing in the east, as to call an unusual number of preachers in that quarter, Mr. Asbury, in allusion to the character and number of the missionaries, and the natural inquisitiveness of the eastern people, exclaimed, while preaching before the conference, "I wonder where all these young men come from, riding good horses, with watches in their pockets." A few of our countrymen who first turned out in the ministry, are yet living, and on that account it will be as unnecessary as improper to speak of them on this occasion. I am quite disposed, also, to tread lightly on the ashes of the dead, by inclination as well as principle. Of not a few of those who sleep with our fathers, it is in the power of no writer to say much more, than that they lived well, and died well. Modest and retired souls, who sought and found all their praise and recompense in heaven. With constant affection. I remain yours,

SENEX.

No. 8.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. I. January 2, 1822, No. XI. page 326.

Adynasius to the Querist and his friends.

The Querist, and his friends, may rest assured, that *Adynasius* is neither a separatist, nor a revolutionist. In his second number, entitled "Church freedom," he has fully expressed his views and aims. His only desire is to see a practical exemplification in the Methodist Episcopal Church of a balanced government; that shall give equal security to the preachers, and private membership; but he is

persuaded, that this can never be done, as long as the legislative power is exclusively in the hands of the preachers. *Adynasius* begs leave to ask the strenuous advocates for the present order of things, who are so tremblingly alive to the danger of entrusting legislative power in the hands of the church, whether the legislative power though nominally in the General Conference, is really in the bishops? And if not, why it is, that they are not as jealous of the preachers, as of the membership? The bishops are the centre and source of all executive authority. The name of every travelling preacher in the connection is on the point of their pens, and they may write them to what place they please. The oldest elder and presiding elder they may place under the youngest elder, and indeed there is no rule to prevent bishops from giving the charge of a circuit, or a station, to unordained preachers. It is not only in the power of bishops to deprive elders of all executive agency; but also to oblige them to locate. They can appoint them under the greatest family embarrassments, without friends, or credit, to a circuit which cannot support a single preacher, and subject them to a long and expensive journey without any means to defray the expenses, &c. and yet with all this power over the preachers, the most zealous advocates of these prerogatives are not afraid to confide the bishops to the legislative power of those very preachers, without any legal check to prevent them from eurtailing their authority; but as soon as it is hinted, that the members of the church ought, in right, to participate in the law making power, it is apprehended that the very existence and name of episcopacy will be placed in jeopardy. But by a disinterested and unprejudiced logician would not a different inference be made? Would it not seem to him that as the preachers have the most immediate cause of fear from the executive power of the Episcopacy, so the latter would have most to fear from the former. Either the fears of division, and revolution from giving legislative power to the church are groundless, or "there is a wheel within a wheel." It is now universally admitted that the term episcopacy is derived from a Greek word which signifies to overlook, or to oversee, and that bishop means overlooker or overseer. Now St. Peter expressly distinguishes between overseeing and overruling or lordling. Our discipline does not assign legislative power to the bishops only in so far as they are made *ex officio* members and presidents of the General

Conference; they have no *veto* or negative, save a casting vote on an equal division. An attempt, therefore, to transfer legislative power to the members of the church does not take any thing either in whole or in part formally and professedly from the bishops, and yet there are preachers who consider the proposal as subversive of the episcopacy. *Adynasius* and the writers for the Repository have not intentionally expressed one sentiment hostile to a qualified and limited episcopal government, nor have they conceived that any inference could be drawn from what they have written, to warrant a belief, that they aimed at any thing but reform and improvement. It is true, that they are among the number of those who do believe that it is in the power of the bishops to exercise an undue influence over the General Conference, through the presiding elders as long as they have the exclusive choice of them; but surely those who would not have one jot or tittle of power to pass away from the present holders, do not believe in their hearts that the bishops do really possess the law making power in our church, or that they ought to possess it, and that to give any portion of it to the people would thus subvert the episcopacy. If they do, then there is some disagreement between the letter of the discipline and their opinions. We have not made it a question whether the church has been governed well or ill; but whether there be any check-giving principles to prevent a bad government from going into operation to any extent; nor have we any doubt of the possibility among a judicious and reflecting people of rendering episcopacy as safe and as harmless as useful.

As writers of essays for a periodical publication wholly destitute of legislative prerogatives, many considerations combined to prevent them from attempting any thing more than to point out faults and develope principles. The ungracious manner in which proffered services are generally received—the danger of dogmatising upon subjects of church polity, as it almost unavoidably leads to narrow and party views—and the appearance of officiousness and presumption in individuals who attempt to dictate to organized bodies, are of themselves a sufficient answer to the query, why find fault with the present plan and not point out a better?

In fact, the only difficulty in our case is, to produce a conviction of the evils which may result from our present unbalanced government in artful and ambitious hands, and

to produce a just and liberal habit of thinking. The servile manner, in which our rulers in many instances have copied the usages of the British connexion and the tenacity with which accidental and temporary regulations are adhered to, regardless of all changes of circumstances, ought to be corrected by a temper and spirit more genial to our actual independence and the constitutional love of liberty peculiar to the American people. If the Methodists should let the world and the preachers know that they consider themselves as God's clergy and heritage, and will not suffer themselves to be *over* ruled or lorded over—if the preachers would unanimously abandon the foolish evasions, and pretexts, and excuses and fears, which they have discovered so great a proneness to indulge in, whenever the subject of church freedom is broached, and frankly declare that they want nothing more than a sufficient degree of power to secure a correct administration of discipline.—If, in a word, the preachers should come forward and invite the church to co-operate with them in devising and carrying into effect, a division of power suited to times, circumstances and men's manners, disastrous and ruinous divisions might be prevented, the existing prejudices in the public mind against our present polity overcome, and unexampled prosperity be the result.

There is not, we are fully persuaded, any single act that would be so beneficial to the Methodist Episcopal Church, as for the General Conference to concede to the church the power of legislating upon the rules and regulations by which it is to be governed. Such a measure promptly and voluntarily taken, would tend to conciliate all hearts, and with such an avowal of principles the General Conference would be trusted without a murmur and without fear; but so long as the preachers plead either the unlawfulness or impossibility of the church participating in the law-making power, there will be little confidence and cordiality between it and the General Conference. We have almost daily examples of the weakness of the ties which bind the members to the body, in the manner which they either withdraw from it or suffer themselves to be excluded. The strength and security of a church in this country must ever depend upon the affection of its members; destroy this and the first shock jeopardizes its existence.

No. 9.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. 4, January 17, 1822, No. xxi. page 230.

Anticipation.—Our Episcopacy will go the way of all flesh.

There are certain causes whose effects are known so well, that wherever we see them in operation, we may safely predict or anticipate their consequence. It is now reduced to a certainty, that all is committed to the issue of a struggle for the majority. All the minor considerations respecting the presiding elder question, are swallowed up in this one, shall the order remain as it is? It is altogether idle to talk about nominations and elections, and making them chairmen of districts, and an hundred other notions. Changes and interests must be made, so as to gain the majority in the next General Conference to vote for the old order of things. Now we anticipate that sundry appointments will prove very unpopular, and that from this quarter new fears will arise. It will be found that the thinkers will prove "too many" for the men in power. What then can be done? Why the thinkers must by some means be brought into place. The best pastures must be given to those who can do the most to deserve them. A market must be opened for talents, and we must have a school for logicians who can match the balancers. And in process of time, by this natural and obvious process, we shall get a race of learned presiding elders, and finally of learned bishops. We do not mean to insinuate that they will not be very good men and good officers, but that they must have a little more learned leisure, and as they will know by experience the value of good helmsmen, they will find it expedient to give the laboring oar more frequently into the less skillful hands. It is not to be presumed that the present worthy incumbents have any of these anticipations or intentions, but that on the contrary they are aiming to avoid these consequences by every means in their power, but they are short lived mortals, and may not their successors aim at other ends, or may they not be in the vortex? The current of events may prove uncontrollable, and no alternative be left them, but to pursue the course we have anticipated, or give up power. The more convenient and wealthy stations, circuits, and districts, must be secured to favorites for the double purpose of securing both preachers and people. All this may be done so as for a time to conceal the ulti-

mate object from the doers as well as others; but every step taken in this process, will render it more difficult to recede until it becomes impossible. How many changes took place in the Roman hierarchy before the election of the pope was fixed unalterably in the hands of the cardinals. Now the pope makes cardinals, and the cardinals make the popes. A certain writer, in allusion to the vast incomes of the bishops in the English hierarchy, and the almost starving condition of the curates, &c. compares the effects of those salaries upon the minds of the clergy of the English church to that of a lottery upon the public mind, &c. This, in some respect, will be the final condition of our hierarchy. All will be taught to hope for the few prizes, the best accommodations, and all will despair of them without the favor of the episcopacy. The bishops will make the presiding elders, and the elders the bishops. Mutual interests will give rise to mutual fears. No sensibilities are more instinctive than those which belong to ambition. All this commerce for places may be carried on by dumb signals or indirect hints. A bishop once said to a preacher, that his colleague proposed him for a certain district, but I said, you was too much of a republican. The preacher was indeed too much of an independent man to be won by such an artifice, but he was a young man, and was more intent upon the improvement of his mind than desirous of office. The time was not yet come to try him to the uttermost, nor is it yet fully come to try other men so; but come it surely will, if the present unbounded prerogative remain. Several changes must before long take place, not for the want of zeal or fidelity on the part of the servants, but for the want of popularity: yet, as we have hinted, we do not think the plan is yet fully matured. In our great lottery of offices, there are too many blanks for the prizes, and the prizes are too great. There is too much temptation to ambition for human virtue long to withstand. It is most seriously to be regretted that some plan could not have been mutually adopted to equalize the influence of office more effectually, but if the attempt fails in the next General Conference, it will probably be too late to make another effort. The English national church is said by its own clergy to be the best in the world, and it may be so, we only oppose the ancient maxim to the testimony, "Let another man praise thee, and not thy own lips," &c. It more immediately concerns us to consider, that whatever excellence there

may be in any national church, ours is not national. That a church and ministry like ours, the youngest and the last among the thousands of our Israel, should be so rare ripe in prerogatives, leads us to fear the natural consequence, "soon ripe, soon rotten." We have always apprehended that our strength or power grew too fast for our understandings. No disproportion, in our judgments, is more unbecoming, or of more injurious consequence. And certainly none is more difficult to correct. In the progress which we anticipate, we do not conceive that much immediate inconvenience will be felt in those conferences that are nearly unanimous on either side; its first effects will be realized in those parts where the members in opposition are nearly balanced. If our anticipations are ever realized in any degree, the friends of ecclesiastical liberty need not wholly despair, for they must perceive that though power cannot be controlled by an external agency, there are cases in which it tends to neutralize itself. P. F.

No. 10.

Western Repository, vol. 1, January 17, 1822, No. xxi. page 332.

Methodist History.—Letters to a Young Preacher, No. IV.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

The intervention of a wide ocean betwixt this and the then mother country, is well known to have been one of the causes which led to our independence. A similar cause led to a similar effect in respect to the Methodist society. We were too far removed from the parent stock even while the national relation existed, to reciprocate the feelings and affections of one body or family, unless some other means had been resorted to than that of occasional visits from missionaries. But though we obtained Mr. Wesley's consent to become an episcopal church, it does not appear on the face of the communications and transactions, that he anticipated all the events which actually took place. The election of Mr. Asbury by the American preachers before he would be ordained, placed him beyond the power of recall by Mr. Wesley; and the omission of the name of the latter in our minutes, gave rise to feelings of a very unpleasant nature. Dr. Coke, whose sensibilities were constitutionally too quick and powerful for his prudence, actually

commenced the complaint in the pulpit, and was only restrained by the timely and resolute interference of some of the more judicious of the preachers. The circumstantial evidence is sufficiently strong to induce a belief that Mr. Asbury had an eye to his own security in making his election a previous condition of his ordination. The leaving of Mr. Wesley's name out of the American minutes, resulted almost exclusively from political considerations; and we are safe in concluding that the reason why Mr. Asbury did not make a more strenuous opposition to the measure, arose from a thorough knowledge of the danger of the case. He had witnessed all the difficulties which the American preachers had encountered in consequence of the public notoriety of Mr. Wesley's early opposition to our national cause. To revive an inveterate national prejudice so soon after the war, would certainly have been hazardous. The prayer book and the gown were not so quietly given up, particularly the latter, in behalf of which a considerable struggle was maintained, and some ungracious tempers provoked. A certain preacher being introduced to a friendly gentleman in New Jersey, as a great advocate for the gown, his reply was, "If I could have my will they should be all tied tail to tail, like Sampson's foxes, and fire brands placed between them." No habit could be more inconvenient for a horseman, and the want of a *vestry or dressing-room* to the country chapels, exposed the *gown-men* not only to much difficulty, but also to some ridicule. These trappings of episcopacy were finally given up, and all the heart-burnings that they occasioned have long since subsided. The advocates for the prerogative, unlike their European predecessors, had discernment sufficient to foresee that they were nowise essential to the existence or the exercise of power, especially in this country, and therefore judiciously yielded to the popular prejudice.

As nothing contributes so much to the developement of human character and conduct as a knowledge of the principles under which men act, it is desirable that you should make yourself intimately acquainted with the principles of your ministerial ancestors. I shall not hesitate, therefore, as often as convenient, to bring principles into review. You may recollect that lay-preachers were considered in the English conferences, as a sort of extraordinary missionaries, raised up and sent forth in a providential, as well as gracious way, to provoke the regular clergy of the national

establishment to jealousy. The recorded peculiarities and varieties of the belief of our ancestors, is to us a kind of inheritance, or property, and not a mere deposit committed to us for safe keeping. If we can use this property so as to make ourselves wiser than they were, we have a right so to do. The most fastidious advocate for primitive Methodism is found to have varied his faith in God's designs in raising up *lay-preachers* and the people called Methodists, &c. &c. We do not believe now-a-days, if a young man professes to be called to preach, that there is any thing so very extraordinary in the case, as was once supposed. He is sent forth without any reference to the clergy of the church of England, or any other church, to preach the gospel to every person who is disposed to hear him at any hour of the day, though others may be preaching at the same time. The primitive preachers believed that a preacher ought to have the judicial power over all the members of the society; and this power, they conceived, they ought to exercise over the members of an independent church, as well as while they were members of a national church; and of the society at the same time; and their excommunications from the latter, did not affect their standing in the former. No Methodist preacher, before ordination was introduced among us, could deprive any person of the sacrament, and yet the members of the conference of 1784, all preachers as they were, did not scruple to entrust this awful power exclusively to their own hands and the hands of their successors. The cautious policy of Mr. Wesley, and his prudential movements in regard to the national church, I am not disposed to criticise; but it appears to me, that it led both him and his followers into a species of empiricism in cases where only abstract principles should have guided them. If it could have been possible for Mr. Wesley, on the supposition that he was properly addressed by the Methodists in this country, after the acknowledgment of our independence by the British government, to have replied to their request to be acknowledged by him as an independent church, that, *Whereas the United States had become independent, and application had been made to him, &c. &c. he did consent that they should meet together personally or by delegates chosen by and from among themselves, and make and adopt such form and plan of church government as they in their judgment might judge both scriptural and best adapted to their local and national situation, &c. &c.*

And had it been possible for the American Methodists and preachers to have proceeded in this way, and have formed a system by which the legislative, executive and judicial powers of the church should so mutually balance each other, as to prevent any man or order of men in the ministry or membership, from infringing upon the rights of others, &c. &c. our condition at this time, I am inclined to think, would have been rendered much more prosperous. Now, the impossibility in this case did not arise from a want of goodness or wisdom, but from the prejudices of education; local partialities, and the habits of mind which they were calculated to engender. With a heart full of good wishes, I remain, &c.

SENEX.

No. 11.

Wesleyan Repository vol. 1. March 28, 1822. No. xxvi. page 409.

A memorial to the members of the Philadelphia Annual Conference.

This memorial humbly sheweth, that whereas the experience of near forty years proves, that the division (or rather want of division) of power established by the conference of travelling preachers who first organized the Methodist societies in the United States into a separate and independent church, is, in this country (the genius of whose government, and the spirit of whose citizens, are the most free of any country upon earth,) better adapted to the spreading of the peculiar doctrines of Methodism than to the prosperity of churches—and whereas it is evident, that a strong sense of public disapprobation exists against those principles in our form of discipline and church government, by which the members of our church are wholly excluded from all participation in the law-making power, and are thus reduced to a level in point of religious liberty, with those professors of religion who lived in the most barbarous, ignorant, and despotic ages—and whereas, internal disaffection and loss of confidence are manifesting themselves in different places among the members of our church, threatening the most dangerous consequences to its peace and union:

The Philadelphia Annual Conference are appealed to, in order to induce its members to take these important and weighty matters into their most serious consideration; and, from the decided part they have taken in favor of all questions pertaining to the cause of religious freedom, a fond hope is cherished, that they will not wait for the other conferences, but set them the example; and, as the General Conference have established a rule, making the concurrence of the annual conferences necessary to certain changes in the existing form of government, they will come forward before the church and the public, with a formal and explicit declaration, setting forth, that in their judgment and belief, the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in these United States, ought of right to have a voice personally, or by their representatives, in ordaining, making, or altering the rules and regulations appertaining to the discipline and government of the church. And moreover, that the members of the Philadelphia Annual Conference, will address the other annual conferences in a suitable manner upon this momentous subject; earnestly soliciting their attention to the danger of delay, as well as to the actual loss the church is suffering in most of those places where active competition is maintained by other reformed churches. The promotion of bible societies, and missions, those fashionable displays of religious liberality and zeal, highly praiseworthy as they are, sink into insignificance in respect to our interest, when compared with the advantages of instating the Methodist Episcopal Church in possession of its rights by a voluntary act of the preachers, who now hold the legislative power. The Philadelphia Annual Conference need not, it is presumed, be reminded of the imperishable fame which must follow such a declaration in favor of the rights of the church; nor is it necessary to urge this motive upon them, as it is believed they are sufficiently conscious of the influence of the higher and more imperious motives of duty. Is there any reason to fear, that the Northern and Eastern conferences will not cheerfully unite in the glorious design of emancipating the members of our church from their present humiliating condition, and of raising them to an equality, and if possible, to a superiority in religious liberty, over the reformed churches in this country? The examples of the Northern and Eastern conferences, will have all the weight upon the Southern conferences, which consistency can give them:

and fortunately for the latter, in aiming to promote the liberties of the church, they will not have to encounter the jealousy and interference of their state governments; as has been unhappily the case in the emancipation of slaves. If there be really any hostility among the Western preachers to the rights of the church, a few years of experience will convince them that religion cannot prosper long in any church in this country which is not free indeed; and that preachers can gain neither profit nor honor by legislating for others without their consent. It may suffice to add, that the declaration herein proposed, will tend to secure the confidence of the members of the church within the bounds of the Philadelphia conference, and that if they find a becoming attention to their interests among the preachers, they will wait in confidence the final result, which in the present state of progressive information, cannot fail to be successful.

Though the members of the church have an undoubted right to claim their legislative rights, yet, it is very desirable for the honor of the preachers, who enjoy them, that they should make a voluntary surrender of them, as such an act would inspire the highest degree of confidence and respect. When the General Conference shall also declare, that the Methodist Episcopal Church ought of right to be free—that no man or order of men have a right to make laws for its members without their consent—and that the attempt is as unevangelical as anti-American, then the doctrine of non-resistance and passive obedience will have no more place among us: then the knowledge gained by experience will lead us towards perfection; and a spirit hitherto unknown and unfelt among us, will inspire us with unexampled energies, and lead us to great success. A Methodist preacher should be able to say with truth, that those who become members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, become the guardians of their religious rights and privileges; that the overseers of this flock and heritage of God, are not its Lords. Our book of discipline will never be complete without a bill of rights.

THOUSANDS.

No. 12.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. i. March 28, 1823, No. xxvi. page 419.

Thoughts suggested by the manner in which the complaints of brethren are treated.

"If you are dissatisfied with our rules, withdraw from the church, go to Stillwell." "We can do without you," &c. We shall not now inquire whether this kind of language savors of hard-heartedness or of self-sufficiency; nor whether it be precisely in unison with "come go with us, we will do thee good." But we put the question whether those who have right and truth on their side, are entitled to no credit, when they make any sacrifice of these to the peace of the church? Are not those who know their rights, under the necessity of continuing to know them? Can any length of time, in which men forbear to exercise their rights, give to others a title to exercise them in their stead without their consent? Rather, from the very nature of the case does not every hour and every day they submit their rights to others, diminish the pretensions of usurped authority? Though men who know nothing, may very sincerely fear nothing, yet this cannot be the case with those who apprehend danger. We know, from the authority of an infallible oracle, that there can be nothing new in the operation of cause and effect. We must therefore believe, that there can be no office in our church exempt from the frailties of human nature. And so long as we believe this, we must fear the consequences of the depraving influence of vice over church officers. Our presiding elders cannot be impeached by any power in their districts. Two presiding elders from neighboring districts must make and select the court. Bishops too, are only subject to impeachment through the intervention of presiding elders of their own choosing: yet all these are small matters when compared with a monopoly of legislative power, which destroys all security, that a bad state of things may not be made worse, as well as the good be changed for the bad. And yet with all these causes of complaint—with all these causes of fear—men who see them and feel them, are required to be contented and satisfied; and if they whisper or groan, the door is pointed to, and they are told it is upon the latch, and that they may go out into the wide world or where else they please. The General Conference, one would suppose, ought to be open and accessi-

ble to the opinions of all; and the preacher or private member, who endeavors to prevent the discussion of principles, ought to be deemed an enemy to the brethren. For an official man to request preachers or members to withdraw, is an offence which can only be exceeded by expelling them unjustly. What right has any man to brow beat another out of his fellowship, because he is dissatisfied with an existing rule which is made alterable by its own enactment? There are many men among us, who must lose their senses before they can be reconciled to the legislative and executive powers in the church being exclusively in the same hands.

ADYNASIUS.

No. 13.

Preface to Wesleyan Repository, vol. ii.

To those who anticipated opposition only to the Discipline, from the Repository, every *position* and *sentence*, not having upon their *foreheads*, the marks of *non-resistance* and *passive obedience*, seemed to take the attitude of resistance. The writers for the Repository, are yet to be convinced that the letter of the Discipline is opposed to the rights of the members of the church. That the Discipline neither grants nor guarantees to the church the right of making rules and regulations for its government, is certain; but, by what argument, can it be demonstrated, that the contents of the Discipline, oppose all it does not grant? The truth is, that book is entirely silent upon the great question of church rights, except in the 18th and 22d articles of religion, which expressly assert them. Not one of the six restrictions (most improperly denominated the constitution!) is opposed to the principles of church legislation. Church representation is perfectly compatible with any fair construction of either of the restrictions, or of episcopacy and general superintendency.

These pages recommend no *overt act*, either for the purpose of suspending or controlling the execution of discipline. Its writers submit to the powers that be; not for wrath, but for conscience sake; i. e. for peace sake. Is there any more reason, we would most seriously ask, for accusing writers of opposition to discipline, who write in

favour of a change in its rules, by legal means, than there is in charging politicians with treasons, for arguing in favour of the repeal of old and injurious laws, and the enactment of new and wholesome ones?

In this volume; the *principle of right*, in behalf of the members of the church has not only been maintained; but, in addition to the defence of *rights*, certain opinions have been combatted, either as unscriptural, or as contrary to the discipline itself. That the authors of the opinions controverted, should claim for their own exclusive benefit, the praise of truth and right, was to have been expected; and of course, that they should consider their opposers, as enemies of the discipline, if not of the church. But we fear not to assert, that, every member of the church has as substantially inherent privileges to investigate opinions and practices regarding discipline, as the ministry have to legislate for the church without its consent; to impose penal laws, and, to publish them to the world. However it may fare with legislative enactments, thus originated, put forth and executed independently of the governed, we are sure that the opinions and arguments of individuals, do not amount to legal acts.

Suppose, for instance, that A says, the General Conference have no powers to make rules and regulations for our church—and Z says, they have "*full powers*"—and B says, the *divine right* of the government is in the body of elders; but Z denies it. Now Z cannot with any shadow of justice be charged with opposing the discipline in either of these cases. In the first case, the dispute is about the *meaning of words*; and the proofs, are proofs of *fact*, not of *right*: Z does not say that the General Conference, *ought* to have full powers; he only contends, that *definite restrictions*, cannot destroy *indefinite full powers*. And in the second case Z does not refuse actual obedience to the government of the elders, nor to any body else, who are in authority according to the discipline; but he *proves*, FIRST, that the fathers of the discipline did not trace its powers to the Scriptures; and, SECONDLY, that the powers claimed by B for the body of elders, cannot be derived from the Scriptures. It was B then, not the discipline, who claimed *the divine right* for the body of elders, and, if Z has disproved the claim, the discipline remains as it was. When, therefore, B and his friends attempt to break the head of Z, with the Book of discipline, they do not treat him logically; and he has a right to self defence. These distinctions between the discipline, and those

who dispute with each other, for or against certain powers, are of importance; for, as long as each party obeys the discipline, is it not equally bound to protect both?

Having brought this second volume to a close, we would devoutly express our gratitude to divine providence. Readers and patrons are now invited to reflect more seriously than ever upon the merits of this controversy. We think writers may confidently appeal to you in favour of the great cause advocated; and we doubt not, that you will not only duly appreciate their prudence, zeal and diligence, in maintaining and defending ecclesiastical rights and liberties; but, that you too, will enlist under the same banner, and never cease the holy strife, until *obsolete* is written, on every vestige of *clerical supremacy*.

No. 14.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. II. June 1822, No. II. page 67.

The tradition of the elders: or as some call it, the constitutional question.

This is a brilliant period for the shores of our Chesapeake, and the Baltimore conference. The mantles of our Pigmans* and Cassells have again fallen upon the favorite

* Ignatius Pigman, one of the early Methodist preachers, was a natural, rather than a self-taught orator. At one period of his life, by a train of untoward circumstances, he became obnoxious to a considerable degree of public prejudice and censure; and yet, at that very time, in his native place, surrounded by his greatest opposers, such was the power of his eloquence, that he could work upon their feelings in a manner which surprised and confounded them. His surviving hearers to this day give him the precedence of all other speakers. There seems to be sufficient evidence to induce us to place him among the great natural orators who have appeared in different ages and countries, and indeed, if we might adopt the rule in order to determine the native countries of orators, which naturalists do, in order to ascertain the native regions of certain trees and fruits, viz. whenever they are found wild in the forests, as the olive tree in Asia, which produces fruit in perfection when the surrounding growths are cleared away, and it is exposed to the sun. We might safely pronounce the shores of the Chesapeake, to be a native country of orators. Men, women, and children, learned and unlearned, rich and poor, can all relate anecdotes of the effects of Mr. Pigman's preaching. Unfortunately it should seem, that he furnishes another melancholy example of the danger of trusting to native powers of elocution, and neglecting to cultivate them. It is highly probable, that, if the consciousness

sons of Maryland. After two days of debates and explanations, the resolution to pronounce the act of the late General Conference, respecting the choice of presiding elders unconstitutional, was indefinitely postponed 49 to 26. The opposers of the resolution would fain have dissuaded its friends from bringing it forward at this time; but when it was submitted, they shrunk not from the discussion. This result is highly gratifying in many respects; we were particularly pleased to find that so much amicable feeling remained after the question was put to rest; and we trust that this trial of strength will serve to abate that air of contempt, heretofore but too visible in the manner of certain brethren, and produce a more respectful tone of feeling in the breasts of those who have the mortification to find themselves in a minority, they will not surely deem it a great act of condescension to treat their brethren in the majority as equals. The address, it is said, has the merit

of his mighty energies, as is too often the case, had not allured him from the closet, he might have escaped all the misfortunes of his life, and left a name among the foremost in the rolls of fame. Mr. Pigman was once preaching on the commons in Baltimore, and in illustrating the joys of a converted penitent, he introduced a sailor, who, after a long and tempestuous voyage, descries land: but using a landsman phrase, a sailor, who was lying on the grass, sprang up, and cried out in his wonted tone "*land hoo!*"

We take occasion to bring into view, the talents of our public speakers, not from any affectation of vanity, but to convince our friends, that the effects which they have witnessed, were produced by adequate causes, and our opponents, too, if they should chance to be among our readers. We have really had men among us from the beginning, who were inferior to none, who lived in the same time, and place. Several of the members of the Baltimore conference, who have been in the habit of hearing our statesmen and counsellors, declare that they seldom if ever heard a speech to surpass that of our Apollos on the present occasion, and we are sure that in this judgment they do not greatly err, as brethren cannot be easily blinded by party favoritism, while matters of controversy engender keen feelings of resistance. He who can extort admiration from a rival brother in the heat of debate, displays the greatest resources of his art, and must be a master indeed. We are not ignorant that it was said on the floor of the conference, that the arguments were not new; but this was disingenuous. It is a mere matter of accident with the genuine orator, whether he or another, first advanced an idea. It is the privilege of such geniuses to give new lustre to every subject they touch. We consider this as an era in our conference, and if there be not something radically defective in our system, we are destined to rise to new and unexampled degrees of eminence.

of being well composed. It is unusually long, and some say, remarkable for pushing assumptions to their extremest consequences—"If the sky shall fall we will catch larks." The writers of the address wanted nothing but facts and arguments to have secured to them a complete victory. We hope that so much talent will never again be so much misplaced. How such acute logicians should have been so little versed in the art of divining, is matter of surprise. This immense display of art, could only have been intended for the north and the east, where it is as unavailing as Persian numbers against Grecian tactics. The chief speakers in behalf of the powers of the General Conference, are in several respects dissimilar to each other: Mr. ——— was marked by the genius of oratory for her own, she gave him a memory as true as a mirror and of the utmost tenacity, gifted him richly with taste, and inspired him with undaunted heroism, but unfortunately, from some cause or other, the bees neglected to settle on his lips,* and the ardor of his mind partakes more of the nature of earthly fires than of the lightning of heaven, but, notwithstanding his want of tone and melody of voice, and defect in the art of condensing his thoughts, he is a formidable rival, and if he shall give more of his days and nights to writing and pruning, will rank high among the first class of orators. Mr. ———, on the contrary, wants nothing but physical force, nature and art have vied with each other in enriching and embellishing his mind. He is unquestionably a most skillful debater. A head so cool and so clear, is rarely found in any deliberative body. We have to regret that we may not give an abstract of this interesting debate, as the address is inaccessible to us, and we choose not to trust to memory.

Taking the address, as we may safely do, as an expression of the opinions of its authors and advocates, we may give a satisfactory view of the final form into which the question in dispute is likely to resolve itself. This we have already expressed in our motto, "The Tradition of the Elders"—that is to say, this controversy cannot be carried on without obliging the opposers of the powers of the General Conference to say in effect, that a usage or custom ought to continue because it has been—that it is not old because

* The ancients used to say of those who were remarkable for sweet or honied accents, that the bees settled on their lips as they slept in their cradles.

it is right, but right because it is old—for the restriction cannot be made to apply at all unless it is construed so as to embrace all the existing rules. They must argue, therefore, that the General Conference of 1808, did not intend that any of these should be altered by any General Conference, and of course it was wrong for the General Conference of 1820, to alter one of them.

The change contemplated by the General Conference is recommended in the address, provided all the annual conferences agree to it. But the Mississippi conference would not agree to it, and was only prevailed upon by the presiding bishop to suspend its vote till next year. We predicted precisely such a state of things, and still wonder above measure how the authors of the address could have been induced to believe in a different result.

URIEL.

In the July number, 1822, page 111, "Review of Methodist Episcopacy, by Amicus," commences, and is concluded page 377.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. ii, July 1822, No. iii. page 114.

The concluding essay of Philo-Pisticus.

MR. STOCKTON—I find by your last number that you are about to give up your Repository for the want of patronage. If it is not too great a sacrifice, I would wish you to publish one number more, on account of this communication, which seems to be called for by the nature and number of my essays on the subject of church government. The aid of my pen, as you recollect, was selected by yourself; but no contract ever existed betwixt us; while I was free to write, you were equally so to publish or not. As I have no claims upon you, it would be ungenerous to request you to burden yourself with additional expense for my sake.

I was taught by the creed (commonly called the Apostles's) to believe in the Holy Catholic Church, and in this I acquiesced until the Romish writers drove me to examine, and the examination ended in a conviction that this article in the sense which the Romanists give it, could not have been penned by the Apostles. Those who believe that the

Romish church, or some of its officers, by modification of their existence, are infallible, and that there is no salvation out of its pale, use the words "I believe," &c. in a different sense from those who profess merely to believe in the existence of an universal church. This last meaning also I have been induced to consider as not sufficiently expressive, and have added or rather implied the word *rights*; so that this article of my creed became, or, "*I believe in the rights of the whole church and of every part of it.*"

That, the word Catholic, or universal, was not used by the apostles, seems to me to be probable, as I can perceive neither the propriety nor the use of it at that early period. Was it suited to the mouth of a newly-converted Jew, whose greatest difficulty evidently arose from the giving up of his fellowship in the ancient church of his fathers for the newly established church of Jesus Christ? This appears from the following passages: "This sect which is every where spoken against." "A ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarines." "After the way that they call heresy, (or a sect) so worship I the God of my fathers." Were those Jews and Paul at that time accustomed to the high-sounding words Catholic or universal? Was not the word infant, more expressive of the state of the church in the days of the Apostles, than universal? Did the members of the primitive church doubt, or had they any cause to doubt its holiness? When the church became numerous, and the spirit of division ran high, the epithets holy, catholic, and apostolic, were naturally enough suggested, and it was in some such time that they were probably introduced. The part of the Apostles' creed, or their belief, which related to the church, appears to me to have been something like the following, viz. I believe that all the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who shew their faith by their works, are members of the general church. I believe that every member of any individual church has a right to be judged by his peers. I believe that no body has a right to make laws for the government of a church, without the consent of its members. The probability that the creed or belief of the Apostles was nearly, if not exactly, in substance as here stated, will appear from the following references: "I will shew thee my faith by my works." "If thy brother offend thee—tell it unto the church, and if he hear the church—and if not, let him be to thee as a heathen man," &c. "Not that we have dominion over your faith." "The

elders which are among you I exhort—feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight—neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock." These texts do strengthen, establish and settle my faith in the rights and privileges of the holy-catholic or universal church; I do believe that there are other christians besides those of the particular church of which I am a professed member, and that all christians are to be judged in this world, and at the last day, by the evidence of their works, rather than by their professions. And moreover, I do believe, that no plan can be adopted to lord it over God's heritage so effectually as for its overseers to make laws to govern it without its consent—that this is one of the most dangerous examples of the exercise of principle, which the elders can give to the flock of God, or the republic, or the world. The germ, the embryo, the quintessence of all the evils which can affect human society, is contained in this one principle. It is, as it were, a Pandora box of social miseries. By this one fatal expedient, of making laws to govern others without their consent, every species of crime has been at some time or other legalized. All the slavery of the body and the mind, in all its civil, religious, and domestic forms, may be traced directly or indirectly to the principle that men have a right to make laws to govern men without their consent. Give to a slave a power to make laws for himself, and where are his fetters? War, all fierce, and cruel, and bloody, as it is, would loose more than half its horrors, if the conquered were left to make their own laws. The millions of Africans, and their descendants, who are transported over the Atlantic, or driven like cattle from north to south, and from east to west, in our country, would have cause to bless the day of their transportation, if no laws could be made to govern them without their consent, in the countries to which they are destined. What reformation in religion is there, or can there be, if the members of the church have not restored to them the power of making the laws by which they are to be governed? Have they any security for the salvation of their own souls? But was it not a great and glorious thing for the English nation, when the supremacy of the church of England was transferred from the Pope to the King, from Rome to London? undoubtedly it was; but still it was only a change of masters or lords. Under the new supremacy there was oppression enough in all conscience. The supremacy of our

General Conference was not obtained by way of exchange. This master and lord of ours is not a substitute for a worse one and a foreign one. The king of the English church, and its hierarchy, claimed no supremacy over any christian in the United States; no, not even over her most dutiful daughter, the Protestant Episcopal Church, who is acknowledged by her to be a true church, though she admits no supremacy under heaven, but makes her own laws by delegates of her own choosing. Ah! what heart of sensibility can contemplate this voluntary assumption of power on the part of our travelling preachers, without grief and shame?

It is now nearly twenty years since I resolved never to enter into a General Conference to make laws for others, without their consent. In one instance indeed I broke this resolution; but it affords me no self-complacency. During this period, though my faith in the rights of the church has been firm, yet it has been dead, being alone; and it is probable that it would have remained so to this day, if your paper had not been offered as a vehicle for my excogitations. This silence has often been unpleasant, but when I have beheld among the nations of the earth, who set in the valley of the shadow of political and ecclesiastical death and bondage, the progress of the principles of free suffrage and the rights of legislation, my feelings have been agonized almost to phrenzy, lest our travelling preachers should persist to make laws for us without our consent, until the Pope himself shall grant to his subjects in the ecclesiastical states a lay delegation, which he will do sooner or later, or his name in common with others who maintain such a supremacy over the church as to legislate for it without its consent, will be blotted out from under heaven.

Well, my friend, however faulty my silence may have been, perhaps I have gained something by this delay. Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh. My heart has been full to overflowing, and I trust that I bear this testimony in the true spirit of martyrdom. I love the church and I love the preachers, and it is this that adds so much poignancy to my grief, to see that abomination which maketh desolate, ecclesiastical supremacy, standing in our holy place where it ought not. O what a fearful example! What a monstrous alliance to priestly despotism! What would America come to, if all its legislatures should follow the example of our General Conference? Let those states

who do follow it in any measure answer.—I know that the travelling preachers, and many of the members of the church, consider it as a slander not to be borne, to be told that a legislature who make laws for slaves, and the General Conference making laws for the Methodist Episcopal Church without its consent, act under one and the same principle. But can they, or can any man, point out the difference? The difference in the laws they make does not alter the principle. The difference of their motives and objects does not alter the principle. For the legislature may change its laws, its motives, and its objects, as long as it is independent of those for whom it legislates; and the civil legislature legislating over slaves may, as some of them have been known to do, make laws to emancipate them and raise them to the dignity of free citizens with the right of suffrage; while an ecclesiastical legislature may become more tenacious of its monopolized powers. But it will be said that no parallel can be run betwixt civil and sacred matters; that the cause of God is too important to be given up to any temporal consideration—What for instance is to become of the travelling connexion, if the members of the church are intrusted with legislative powers? Often and confidently as this question is repeated, I cannot when I hear it, but cry out, O ye of little faith! Let Isaac ask where the sacrifice is, but the father of the faithful answers, God will provide one my son. How weak must the faith of those be, who are deterred from doing right for fear that evil may happen. I am so far from believing the travelling plan would be injured by the exercise of church rights, that it is my deliberate opinion that it never can greatly prosper in this country, until it is brought to feel the reaction of those rights. Nothing but sincerity in an urgent case ought to induce travelling preachers, or their friends, to confess that they believe that itineracy and the rights of christians are incompatible. But if they really are, can they be put in competition? Is not the former in comparison with the latter as the dust in the balance? The salvation of the world—the millenium depends upon the rights of the church to make the laws by which it is to be governed. All the denominations which sprung from the reformation in the United States, have had a share in this glorious work of church emancipation from supremacy but the Methodists, whose necks have again been brought under the yoke even after they were made free, and to console them for the loss

of this crown of rejoicing, they are told about the travelling plan. If this attempt to put the travelling plan in competition with social rights is persisted in, and the people are taught to believe, that they have purchased and must continue to purchase the former at the immense sacrifice of the latter—will not itinerancy stink in their nostrils? As a friend to a travelling plan, I am bound to advocate the legislative rights of the church.

The advantages of correct principles of liberty to church as well as to state are infinite. It is impossible to calculate or to foresee their extent or duration. How must the bosom of every citizen of the United States swell with pleasure when he reads the constitution of the Republic of Colombia! What was the condition of those Spanish provinces when our independence was declared or our constitution adopted? Behold, may every patriot exclaim, Behold the child of the American doctrine of legislative rights! Illustrious offspring, who almost realizes the ancient fables of the descendants of the Gods—destroying serpents and doing other mighty deeds in the cradle. In our church, alas! no fond anticipations can be cherished of freeborn sons and daughters; lo! we go childless. Deprived of freedom, how can we propagate them? We have neither principles of social liberty to be learned, nor examples of it to be copied.

Over this subject, so fruitful of humiliating and gloomy forebodings, this desert waste without one spot of refreshing green in all the prospect on which to rest the eye, I could pour out my soul like water. I could write forever, could I but hope to rescue my brethren from this strange infatuation of power, this fatal blindness to their own glory, as well as the everlasting good of the church. I am sometimes almost led to doubt the evidence of my own senses. Am I not laboring under some deception of the imagination? Am I in America? Are these Americans? How then is it possible that a whole church should be deprived of the right of suffrage, and none but the voices of masters and lords be heard in these halls of ecclesiastical legislation? Mysterious dispensation! unexampled state of things! Retrograde movement of mind!

Neither ~~same~~ with her trumpet, nor history with her pen, shall proclaim or record the name of one of our bishops among the patrons and promoters of the church's rights to legislate upon the laws by which she is to be governed.

Some one of these overseers, one would think in General Conference, when he looks round and sees none but elders, might feel like a shepherd without his flock. Is he never tempted to ask: Where are the brethren? have they no representatives here? Can he be ignorant that the General Conference, while it legislates for the church without its representatives, exercises a more than mortal sovereignty? It would be well for the supporters of the supremacy to try their skill upon the following texts: "Call no man master, for one is your master, even Christ"—"So that he sitteth in the temple as God, shewing himself that he is God." If those who make laws for us without our consent are not our masters, is there any meaning in the word? I well recollect how I was condemned as it were out of my own mouth, I had attempted to translate and to explain this second passage, without suspecting the consequence, and it reflected, "thou art the man." I had made out, and I thought demonstrably, that absolute legislation is the proper act of God—that he alone has a right to make laws without consulting those for whom they are made, and therefore Emperors, Kings, Councils, and Popes, who make laws for mankind, without consulting them or their representatives, sit in their legislative temples as gods, shewing themselves that they are gods. Notwithstanding all the interest, all the self-love, and perhaps pride too, which opposed the conclusion, I could not shelter myself, nor the General Conference, from it; and to this hour I am terrified and tremble at the recollection of having co-operated in such an awful act. It cannot be long, I am fully persuaded, before the travelling preachers must give up their supremacy. If they will not be advised and warned with the voice of friendship and love, they may expect that the providence of God, which is so evidently abroad in the earth, vindicating the injured and insulted attribute of the law-giver of the universe, will make its displeasure fearfully evident. Ministers of Christ! how could you so misconceive of your calling? You were not called to make laws for others; this was the work of your adorable master. Your work is to oversee; and if bye-laws or rules are needed, you cannot make them, and execute them too. If you will mark the progress of public opinion, you must perceive that what Isaiah said of sacrifice will apply to human supremacy. As he that killeth an ox will be as though he slew a man, so he that shall attempt to make laws for the church will be

in the public opinion as if he committed sacrilege. But while I speak thus, I admit that a consent may be tacit, or implied, and that a change may be a work of time. The present government need not be suspended; all that the travelling preachers need to do to exonerate themselves is, to disavow the principle of right, and declare their readiness to give up the expediency whenever the church requires it. I am not sure that it would not answer a temporary purpose if the church were agreed, for them to elect preachers only; but let not the right be assumed that would be to rebuild the things which were destroyed. The progress of opinion may be steady and triumphant, without impeding the work of religion for a day. I repeat again, there need not be any division. Sacred and important as I do hold the legislative right of the church, I am not so bewildered by enthusiasm, as to imagine, that all men, women and children are so immediately concerned in it that nothing else ought to be said or done until this point is completely gained. The same practical duties which must be done then, may and ought to be attended to now; worthy and useful men are not lessened in my eyes, neither do I wish to lessen them in the eyes of others in other respects, because we disagree in this one point. My wish is to see all our preachers and our whole church not only workers together with God in the great work of awakening and converting souls, but in promoting the social and religious rights of mankind. To this the providence of God seems in a peculiar manner to call every professor of religion in this free country. This great and glorious privilege seems to have been once offered to the British nation, but they judged themselves unworthy of it, and it was given to us, and Bible societies and missions left to them. How it distresses me to think that in all the United States, our General Conference has only the Romish church to keep them company in the supremacy.

The length of time my opinion has been established—the severe and almost hopeless afflictions I have suffered, and by which I am unfitted for active duty; the unexpected manner in which I was invited by you to become a correspondent, and the subsequent developement of the rights of the church in the pages of the Repository, tempts me sometimes to suspect that some providential direction may be laying a train for future events. Be this as it may; those who come after us need not be wholly dependant upon

others, they may find at least one book which claims some affinity to Methodism, in which more than one or two writers have advocated the rights of the church.

PHILO PISTICUS.

No. 15.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. II. October, 1822; No. VI. page 235.

Concerning Ministerial Offices and Succession.

A certain writer remarks, that Dr. Campbell's lectures on ecclesiastical history, gave rise to much acute and *angry* criticism. It is greatly to be regretted, that one cannot touch upon "the holy orders," without "putting a match to gunpowder." The passions, it seems, are so nearly allied to this subject, that the very light of inquiry exposes them to "a blow up." Nothing at first sight can appear more harmless, than to ask what were the origin and duration of the executive offices in the primitive church. Daines Barrington, or some other writer, as quoted by Doddridge, (we have never seen the work,) argues from the republican character of the Grecian states, that the executive offices of the primitive church were probably elective and limited—not for life. It is well known, that the municipal governments of the Greeks continued long after they were reduced under the government of Rome. Our question is in regard to likeness or resemblance. Did the founders of the christian church, (we do not say *imitate*) make the government of the primitive church more like the despotic governments of Asia, and the new empire of Rome, than the republics of Greece? The great body of the earliest converts to christianity were Greeks, or Jews residing among them. This question is in point; as, likeness in this case is unavoidable. If an officer in a church is elected by its members, he is chosen as in a republic—if he holds his office for a limited period, and not for life, the resemblance is still evident. Does he succeed to power by the will of his predecessor, or by the choice of a few officers, and hold his office for life, the resemblance to a monarchy or an aristocracy cannot be concealed, except from those who have eyes and see not. The episcopal office, according to our notion, in the primitive church, was executive; and though an elder might have no executive office for a time, because

not a bishop; still he might be chosen a bishop from among the elders. Query: were they chosen, *like* the archons of Athens, for a limited time? Shocking, monstrous, profane! exclaims a pious son of the hierarchy. What! make it a question whether a "holy bishop" might be like a profane archon of Athens? Let us keep cool. Where is the sin of inquiring after the points of resemblance between a little round yellow pebble and a pea? If the office of "the pious bishop" is like unto that of the arch-bramin, or the Grand Lama, or the kings of Persia, or the autocrat of all the Russias, or the Grand Turk, or any other lord or sovereign, we can't help it; nor will any description of ours alter the points in which they agree. Those churches who have no choice in their executive officers, and to whom they are not amenable for their conduct, are so much alike, that names cannot alter the resemblance. No *like* is the same. Primitive bishops were not archons of Athens, and Methodist bishops are not popes; but whether the former are elected by itinerant elders, or the latter by cardinals, they are both alike, as it respects dependence on the churches; both the one and the other, and their successors to the end of time, may ride over the heads of its members and set their united wishes at defiance. Was a bishop like a Roman consul, or an emperor? Like an archon of Athens, or a king of Babylon? The name, the crown, the throne, the robes, &c. &c. we leave out of the question. In the manner of coming into power and continuing in it: these are the points. Ah ha! so you have spoken out at last. We knew that it was only necessary to give you a rope long enough and you would hang yourselves—that's right—be honest. O most modest laymen! you have no objection to an episcopal government, or to bishops, but you must have them in your power, they must be elected by you and depend upon your caprice—one word, if you please, before you proceed. Who promised after the death of Mr. Wesley, "to do every thing that they judged consistent with the cause of religion in America, and the political interests of those states, to preserve and promote their union with the Methodists in Europe?" Was this promise ever cancelled? Or has it ever been acted upon? Since the death of Mr. Wesley, the supreme executive officers of the Methodists in Europe, have been chosen annually like the archons of Athens. Do our travelling preachers choose their bishops for life, because they judge it consistent with the cause of religion in

America, (not in Europe,) or because they judge it most conducive to the political interests of *these states* to have an executive officer for life? Or do they believe that these differences, or want of resemblance between the governments of the two societies, preserves and promotes their union? This is insulting. You know very well that our bishops were ordained, and of course are the successors of Mr. Wesley, but that the members of the British conference were not ordained. True—we are not wholly ignorant about these matters; but were not the members of the British conference appointed Mr. Wesley's successors by his deed of settlement? A title which we are sure they would not give up or suffer to be brought into competition with our ordination. The truth is, that the intention of Mr. Wesley was countervailed by the election of the Methodist bishops; and, the least that is said about our succession, may be most easily explained.

It would have been gratifying could it have been known how the founder of Methodism would have answered such a letter as the following, had it been, as it ought to have been, written and sent to him before our bishops were elected.

"Venerable father in Christ, we your most dutiful sons in the gospel, in conference assembled, having read your letters, &c. after mature deliberation, beg leave to inform you, that we cannot consent to the ordination of any bishop over us, who is not elected by a conference of American travelling preachers, and thus placing him beyond the reach of your control or recall, and disqualifying you from appointing any other to rule in conjunction with him," &c.

If it was true, as somebody supposed, that the leaving of Mr. Wesley's name out of the American minutes, shortened his days, such a communication would not, in all probability, have added many to the years of his pilgrimage. We only mean to say, that the duration of the executive offices in the British connexion is more like republicanism than monarchy; and that Mr. Wesley knew they would be so. We say, moreover, that it is not just to father our election upon Mr. Wesley, as it is evident enough that he meant to have the making of our bishops while he lived, and of giving them the benefit of a sea voyage now and then, as occasion might serve; but from a dread of water or some other cause, the plan did not take on our side. Now, if it ever comes to pass that the members of our

church have a voice in the choice of our bishops, their election will be more like a republican election than an aristocratical one.

We cannot, indeed, so easily trace our feelings to their origin, as we can analyze them; without pretending, therefore, to account for the fact, we find that we are much less scandalized when we perceive any points of resemblance between an ancient and modern system of church government and republicanism, than when we hear our brethren laboring to prove that the only true features of church government are *fac similies* of all the odious lineaments of priest-craft and king-craft, which have afflicted the bodies and souls of mankind from the beginning of the world to this day. But there is one particular which we well recollect, though we have no doubt forgotten many others. When Mr. Asbury used to contrive to get the votes of the General Conferences to request him to continue to serve the connexion other four years, that circumstance first set us to thinking whether it would be lawful, or expedient, to have an actual re-election of bishops, or choose them only for a term of years: and the strongest objection to such a plan seemed to us, like to the divine right of kings, viz: they are the Lord's anointed, and so we left it. As for the zeal of certain brethren, which knows no bounds in promoting and flattering the prerogatives of bishops, our confidence in it was greatly weakened at an early period by the following circumstance. A preacher of some standing, having received his appointment, complimented the bishop with something so like unerring wisdom, that the grating sound roused our attention; but finding the eulogy was not repelled by any apparent expression of disapprobation, we pondered the case in our hearts, and lo! before the end of the year this obsequious brother had taken his ministerial standing among the Baptists. To conclude this desultory essay; the British connexion have set us an example by choosing their executive officers periodically. Does it not behöve us, in order to preserve and promote a union, to return the republican compliment, and set them the example of giving the members of the church a voice in these important elections, that these servants of the church may be made to feel, in some degree, their dependence on those from whom they derive their title and consequence? It has been well said by somebody, that the ministers were made for the church, and not the church for the ministry.

COMPARER.

No. 16.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. ii. November, 1822, No. vii. page 941.

*Amicus to the Editor.—Dokemasius to Amicus, Nos. I and II.
A view of the Primitive Church and its Government.*

MR. STOCKTON,

I have just received from my much respected friend Dokemasius, two letters and an excellent paper on the primitive church and its government, which he has kindly placed at my service, as auxiliaries in the further prosecution of the review of Mr. B's book. But as they came to hand too late for use in the second part of the review, and as the letters and views on the primitive church, constitute an able, ingenious, and luminous discussion of subjects highly interesting to the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, I have thought it most advisable to forward the whole to you, for publication in the Repository. The second letter, in particular, will serve as an answer to the whispers of those who have intimated that we are Congregationalists. Your's,

AMICUS.

To Amicus.—No.-I.

MOST ESTEEMED FRIEND AND BROTHER,

From what you say of the seller and buyers of the monstrous doctrines contained in the book you are reviewing, I shall not be surprised to find that the separation in New York had its origin, in part, in a knowledge of those things. Mr. Stilwell, as Secretary of the annual conference, may have had an extensive knowledge of men and measures. But, be that as it may, the book was certainly in circulation, and its contents generally known, for a considerable time before the commencement of the publication of the Repository. Offensive war, therefore, was declared against ecclesiastical liberty, by the purchasers of the copy right of the Vindication. In vain may it be argued that it was written against Mr. S. and his congregation, while the proof exists that it was offered for publication long before that segregation. The book contains an avowal of principles, which outrages all the rights and privileges for which martyrs burned or bled. An attempt is now made by our rulers, to their infinite shame be it spoken, to prove that the government of the Methodist Episcopal Church does

not differ in principle from the Popish hierarchy. The first volume of the Repository spared the book and its author, though it was well known that he was making the most strenuous and unremitting efforts to prevent the circulation of the Repository; but longer silence would be criminal. It is time to speak out. Let no false delicacy toward the author, or those who gave him the premium, prevent you from probing to the bottom that conspiratorial publication against the liberties of the children of God. Its contents ought to be exposed to open censure, for they are calculated to produce new segregations. If such works are patronized, the brethren will not be suffered much longer to think and let think—"to agree to disagree."

The enclosed papers are at your service; they were first drawn up in the form of a synopsis, about the year 1799. The present copy is considerably abridged, most of the quotations from the gospels, and the texts in the originals are omitted, and the remarks and reflections shortened. One reason which first led me to make this attempt, was the propensity that I discovered in those party writers whom I read, to use scripture in support of their preconceived hypotheses. It occurred to me, that as the subject of church government is not of the same super-human nature as positive theology; that, therefore, there is not the same necessity for explicit revelation in the form of descriptions, propositions, and commands, and that if a sufficient number of precedents and examples exist in the New Testament to enable us to find a principle, it may be equally true and equally useful, as though it was expressly revealed. Ignorant of the result, and fearless of consequences, I began by collecting the original names of all the church offices and officers; and was surprised to find how often the word deacon, and its derivatives, occurred, and how seldom the word bishop and its derivatives. The two following texts were brought into the most unlooked for conjunction: "And his (episcopoen) bishoprick let another man take"—"Hath counted me faithful, putting me into the (diakonian) ministry." So the apostleship is called a deaconship, as well as a bishoprick. Another result was a full conviction on my mind, that Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Congregational, and such like party names, could have had no place in apostolic times. When the same men called themselves, or were called by others, by various official titles promiscuously, we may be sure that no great

stress was laid upon the dignities of office. Almost all the conclusions, which were thus forced upon me, by this New Testament research, were then, like so many original discoveries, especially the following, viz. that the primitive churches were *confederated*, and not *indivisible*, like the modern episcopalian hierarchies. This conclusion, you will perceive, could not have been admitted by me, had not my mind been so far unfettered as to call no man master. In all these points I may be mistaken; but if I am not, the consequence is unavoidable, and ought to alarm our church hierarchy men exceedingly.

With regard to the contemporary existence of all the church officers mentioned in the New Testament, and the bearing of this fact upon the succession, the conclusion upon my mind is irresistible. The apostles and evangelists were extraordinary officers; their extraordinary work was, in part, the planting and establishing churches. Were they succeeded by the ordinary rulers or overseers of the churches, the bishops? If so, then the successors were both ordinary and extraordinary. Titus was an evangelist, and yet the tradition is that he was ordained the first bishop of Crete, and was at the same time successor to an apostle—one apostle—not, surely, to them all. How things change! In Paul's time, God gave some apostles, some evangelists, and some pastors; but if certain men may be credited, all these distinctions came to be united in one person. Could this change have taken place without an innovation! How is it that our succession men are so inattentive to numbers? We have not a word about the twelve successors. If the twelve foundations were so necessary in the beginning, would it not have been unsafe to have diminished the number as the superstructure grew? We hear nothing about the twelve evangelists, who succeeded the twelve apostles. May we not expect that some one among our profound divines, will soon obtain a handsome premium for writing a book, which nobody will think it worth while to republish, in order to shew the difference between the successors of St. Peter and our three successors of all the evangelists?

Yours,

DOKEMASIUS.

To Amicus.—No. II.

MOST ESTEEMED FRIEND AND BROTHER,

It is impossible for any man, whose mind is not fettered by the prejudices of education, or influenced by an attachment for hypotheses, to read the New Testament without perceiving, that in the days of the apostles there were separate churches, possessing an identity of existence. Or, in other words, that it did not require all the believers in a province, or a country, much less on a whole continent, to make a church (or congregation of faithful men.) Nay, the plurality of churches is so plain, that nothing but invincible ignorance, or obstinate prejudice, can help seeing it. And yet, on all this great continent we have not, nor do our rulers ever intend we shall have, if they can prevent it, but one solitary Methodist Episcopal Church, with one bishop, divided, it may be, among a few men: for all the men who hold the episcopal office among us make but one bishop. Our church is one and indivisible. We have no church in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, or Charleston. We have no church in any one of the states, nor in any number of states, less than the whole. Our church identity extends from the rivers unto the ends of the earth; and our bishop oversees its "temporal and spiritual concerns," having the sole and exclusive jurisdiction, or executive authority, as the head over elders, deacons, and preachers, in all the annual conferences, to send them when and where he thinks proper; to make, form, divide, subdivide, or reunite districts, circuits, stations, &c. &c. It is this one entire indivisible church, this oneness of oversight, which is the glory and boast of our vindicators; and which, in their judgment, constitutes the scriptural character of our church and government. Destroy this identity, this oversight, and then, say they, farewell to the travelling plan; to the discipline, and a thousand other advantages. Many a devout prayer has been offered up, that when the Methodists cease to have these characteristics, they may be rooted out from the face of the earth. Yet, notwithstanding, it does seem strange to some persons, that a church and a ministry, with no power save what is derived from one man, should be defended with so much zeal; they had imagined, that men would shrink from an ocean where all their personal identity as christians and ministers, must be swallowed up. But whoever looks carefully into the

matter, will perceive, that though such may be the fact, it is not perceived by themselves, that classes, and congregations, and stations, and circuits, and districts, conceive themselves to be whole and entire churches; and that class-leaders, and stewards, and travelling preachers, and deacons, and elders, and presiding elders, feel like a sort of bishops, and of course dread a change in the present system. That this, in many instances, is the state of men's views and feelings among us, there is sufficient reason to believe, and these views and feelings account for the tenacity with which they cleave to the present economy. Mr. Hume, in a very able essay, explains the fact, that the Persians submitted for a long time to their conquerors the Greeks; by proving that the successors of Alexander adopted the policy of the Persian kings. Their policy was the same in civil matters, that ours is in church government. In one view, it seems very humiliating, that a whole community, whether civil or religious, should be entirely dependent upon one man; but in another, it is easy to perceive that such a state of dependence must generate expectation, that the same hand which humbles us, exalts us also. By sweeping away every vestige of aristocratical authority, as well as personal liberty, it is, that all absolute governments, whether in church or state, animate the hopes of all, from the least unto the greatest, so that the men who have no security for their highest honors, are, nevertheless, stimulated to the greatest fidelity and zeal in the service of the superior, knowing that all are waiting and watching for their place. Were it not for this great principle of attachment and hope, all the monarchies, and hierarchies, and ours among the rest, would soon fall into ruins. I can, for myself, endure our government, though by a singular anomaly it excludes me, (in common with the rest of my order) not only from all hope of promotion, or reward, but from the possibility of thinking (as others do) that I have some power or consequence, while I have none. I can endure almost any thing from Methodist preachers, except their attempts to prove that this order of things is scriptural. O this stirs my spirit within me! Never, no never, shall the glorious gospel of the blessed God be made to father such a system, if it be in the power of my pen, to vindicate it from such a reproach.

In this age and country, it is not surprising that there should be found preachers and members in our church, who in despite of every other consideration, should express

their utter repugnance to a system which imposes ecclesiastical laws upon them, without their consent. But it is probable, that few, even among this number, are fully aware of their actual condition, and of the consequences which must almost unavoidably grow out of lay delegation. The bishops and preachers themselves, who are the most opposed to the introduction of such a measure, have only, perhaps, a kind of instinctive apprehension of some calamity, which they cannot clearly define. Mr. A's favorite and common place maxim, "local men have local ideas," proves how little he was versed in atomic philosophy. He had often seen amongst us the worst kind of selfishness, which, instead of tracing to its true cause, misguided and misplaced ideas; he strangely attributed to local views. The truth is, that local ideas and feelings are the proper bases of all benevolent and liberal sentiments; and may unite with others to an indefinite extent. We have had abundant occasion to remark, that those who travel away all their localities, travel away all their virtues.

The delegates of the preachers, and of the members of our church, in General Conference assembled, would make the important discovery, which was hid from the sagacious minds of our Wesleys, and Cokes, and Asburys, that there can be no *universal church liberty, without particular freedom*. They would find, with some surprise, perhaps, that instead of a travelling connexion, we have no parts to be connected. The want of ministerial, and church identity, would almost immediately begin to be felt, in the first session. The amalgamated and indivisible mass, would prove too unwieldy for management. Scarcely would the subject of liberty begin to be agitated, before it would be perceived that neither travelling preachers, nor members of the church, have either house or home,—that the boasted maxim of freemen, "every man's house is his castle," would be idle and fallacious in our lips. Our districts, and circuits, and stations, and congregations; have no stability, but may be more or less changed or modified every year by the bishops, who have the plenary power. No sooner then, would these workmen attempt to fix their fulcrums and levers, than they would find occasion to cry out, "give me where to stand!" We have no foothold! None but free men can make a free government, none but free churches can make a free connexion. What is it that makes one mass of matter a rock, and another water? The same cause,

relatively, which makes one community free, and another not free. The particles of water, though capable of intimate union, have the power also of moving freely in all directions among themselves. The first thing, then, that would probably result from a lay delegation, the first important change, which it would produce in the present state of things, would be, the establishment and security of individual church identity; the second step would be to maintain and perpetuate a confederated union among these identified churches; and the third, a modification and accommodation of the travelling plan, bishops' power, &c. to this state of things, upon a basis of ministerial identity, so that every preacher might say his soul is his own. All this, it is evident, would be a work of time, and great labor. In such an event, no General Conference must attempt to limit its successor. The highest efforts of wisdom and theory must go hand in hand with experience, and nothing practical must be sacrificed to hypothesis. Having free men, and free churches, for their materials, a General Conference would be able to raise a noble and glorious superstructure, every way worthy of this new world—this blest land of civil and religious liberty. The only insurmountable difficulty, would be, the name; for, "Episcopal Church," ~~not churches~~, under all changes, must remain to us, to shew "the hole of the pit from which we were digged." This badge of our original sin, like our mortal bodies, can only be put off with our death. From the beginning, we ought to have been confederated churches, and our name ought to have answered to our nature. "An itinerant minister of the confederated Methodist Churches in the United States of America," is a title, which would have avoided all the evil consequences of reviving those odious distinctions, which tend to foster old prejudices and enmities. Episcopal, and Presbyterian, and Congregational, "*moniti meliora sequamur.*" While we dislike the governments which are stained and spotted with human wrongs, we can have no great reverence for their names. But as a republican may inherit the name of "king," so must we retain the name of our fathers; it is our name in law. Yours,

DOKEMASIUS.

A View of the Primitive Church and its Government.

As our fathers and brethren gave us, in their wisdom, a form of church government without furnishing us with any scriptural rules, principles, or doctrines, by which to illustrate and defend it, does it not behoove us to go to the source and fountain head of all information and authority, instead of taking the scriptural character of our discipline for granted, and continuing to build upon a foundation which we have not proved? What would be our condition, were our religion as destitute of scripture support as is our discipline? Nothing can be more plain than our plan of salvation; nothing more perplexed than our plan of government. In the one case, rules and precedents are furnished to us at all points; in the other, all is dogmatical. Our church government may be compressed into the following maxim: "*All power must be in the hands of the preachers; none in those of the members of the church.*"

A principle may be given, or it may be found, which, in either case, will answer equally well for practical uses, and whether given or found, will prove equally true. Nature, in almost all cases, imposes upon her disciples the task of finding the rules and principles of her operations; and even the disciples of revealed religion may, in some minor cases, merely-temporal, be placed in the same predicament. In order to find a scripture principle, which is not formally announced, it becomes necessary to examine all the facts and circumstances, in all their bearings and relations, as they are stated in the bible. In regard to church policy, I am not sure that any principle is formally given in the New Testament; but if not, then it must be found. We find, from the apostolical writings, that there were churches in the plural, and that there were several in the same countries, regions or provinces. Thus: "Then had the churches rest through all Judea"—"Paul went through Syria, confirming the churches"—"As I have given orders to the churches in Galatia"—"The grace bestowed on the churches of Macedonia"—"Ordain I in all the churches"—"In all the churches of the saints"—"John to the seven churches of Asia, grace to you." Each and every church possessed an identity of existence, whether in the same or in other countries. "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them"—"We have no such custom, neither the churches of Christ"—"But was chosen of the churches to travel with

us"—"They are the messengers of the churches"—"When they had ordained elders in every church"—"It pleased the elders, with the whole church"—"If the church be met together in one place." These separate bodies of christians were not called churches by a figure of speech, for they had all the attributes of, and functions of entire churches, as their own particular officers or servants, their own particular places of meeting, and their own particular temporalities. Each of the churches also bore a common relation to the universal and divine head in heaven, without the intervention of any earthly head. These churches were distinguished from their ministers. "But he that prophesieth, edifieth the church"—"No church communicated with me, but ye only"—"And let not the church be charged"—"There were prophets in the church, in Antioch"—"They were received of the church and elders"—Paul sent and called the elders of the church—"How shall he take care of the church of God"—"The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks are the seven churches."

In the New Testament the acts of ministers were not confounded with those of the church; nor those of the church with the acts of the ministry, any more than their names. It may surprise those who have been accustomed to hear of the primitive church, to find, that in Paul's writings no such phrase exists; but that he uniformly writes to, and speaks of churches.

With the opinions of Romanists or Reformed, we have nothing to do, when we are seeking principles. These, I repeat, must be expressed in the New Testament, or they must originate from it, by plain and obvious consequence or inference. If any change take place, even one month after the canon of scripture was closed, or without the authority of the apostles, it is of no more importance in deciding a question of scripture principle, than as though it had happened in the eighteenth century.

From the New Testament, we find, then, the following principles: first, that in the very beginning, churches were local assemblies. Secondly, that each and every church possessed an identity of existence. Thirdly, that each church was distinguished from its office bearers. These three principles of church existence, are three natural, simple, and obvious means of preserving the rights and liberties of churches. By giving to each church identity of existence, every individual one must be destroyed before

the genus can become extinct. The church of any name or country may be destroyed, and yet, if any single christian church remains, in any part of the world, the gates of hell have not prevailed against it. Nothing is more notorious, from the whole tenor of ecclesiastical history, than the process by which churches have been enslaved. Individual churches must be swallowed up, to make dioceses, provinces, &c. This is not only a well known, but a necessary process of a hierarchy. One ministerial head, or sovereignty over many churches, is out of the question. Hierarchists have always aimed to make the church one and indivisible. Be the name, or the form of the head what it may, every part of the body is made equally dependent upon it, and must die if it be cut off.

But the indivisibility of the church has neither scripture, example nor precept for its support. The union of the primitive churches was maintained among themselves upon federative principles. Believers are, indeed, considered as composing one church, as it respects God and Christ; as, "the church of the living God—head over all things to the church," &c.—but when we attend to the addresses of the apostolic epistles, a distinction of the churches among themselves most evidently appears. "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints"—"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia"—"Unto the churches of Galatia"—"To the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus"—"To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons"—"To the saints and faithful brethren which are at Colosse"—"Unto the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"—"To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting:—"To the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia"—"To them which have obtained like precious faith with us"—"John, to the seven churches of Asia." It is evident that the epistles of Peter, and that of James, were written to Jewish converts, and that they have been improperly called general. Certainly those members of the twelve tribes who were scattered abroad, were not a whole, or a universal church; nor yet the strangers who were scattered through the provinces of Asia Minor. There is nothing impossible or contradictory in the idea of confederated churches being one body, as it relates to their heavy head. In this respect, "there is

one spirit, even as ye are called; in one hope of your calling." It is this that constitutes all the individuals who compose different congregations, or churches, one body in Christ, as fully as though there was but one pastor or universal bishop, under whom all the believers were reduced to one congregation. The unity of the church is no more affected by the identity of churches, than citizenship is by the identity of family relations.

The men who did not write to two churches in the name of one; who wrote no catholic epistles, cannot be supposed to have exercised a universal government. Their acknowledgment of distinct churches, with their proper officers, is proof positive that they established no hierarchy. How would it sound to hear of the churches of Rome, of the churches of England, or the Methodist Episcopal Churches, would not these be strange sounds in our ears? Such seamed garments, and jointed harness, are not adapted to supremacy. The body must be one, and the name one, that the head may find no resistance in council or command.

Thus, we have sought in the New Testament for principles by which to regulate our judgment, of the existence and unity of churches; and, if our deductions be true, they are the same practical utility as though the sacred writers had expressed them in the form of propositions. Let us adopt the same method in searching for the principles of church government.

"And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"—"God hath set some in the church, first, apostles; secondly, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments." In these two passages, and they are the most detailed account of the primitive office of any in the New Testament, bishops and elders are not mentioned by name. The pastors and teachers in the first, may be supposed to answer to the teachers and governments in the second. The apostles, prophets, evangelists, miracles, gifts of healing, &c. are confessedly extraordinary, for they are equally wanting in all other ages and countries. The idea that bishops are successors of the apostles, in the only sense it can possibly be admitted, is *precluded by their co-existence*. Nothing is more plain, than that pastors, go-

vernments, bishops or elders, were contemporary with the apostles. "And Paul sent for the elders, and said take heed to the flock of God over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers"—"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them who labor among you, and are over you, in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake"—"Remember them who have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow." It may be remarked in passing, how little this style savours of the dictatorial. But these passages prove, most unequivocally, that in Ephesus, in Thessalonica, and among the Hebrews, St. Paul recognised overseers, rulers, pastors or governments, as well as teachers. A succession to oversight or government, in the churches, must, therefore, be to those, and not to the apostles; for by the shewing of Paul himself, the apostles and evangelists had not the oversight or rule, in the churches enumerated above; and no one overlooked them all; their bishops were among them. Now does it not follow, by analogy, where no evidence is found to the contrary, that the case was similar to other churches? That is, that there were elders in every city and church, whom the Holy Ghost made overseers.

Apostles, evangelists, prophets, gifts, miracles, &c. &c. might have been necessary in the planting of churches, and the completion of written revelation; but this extraordinary work once accomplished, the extraordinary succession would destroy the identity of the original.

We will now examine the several passages where bishop, elder, deacon, or minister, occur. "He sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church; the Holy Ghost hath made you (said he) (episcopi) overseers"—"This is a faithful saying, if a man desires the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work"—"A bishop must be blameless"—"To all the saints at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons"—"The elders I exhort, who am also an elder; feed the flock, taking the oversight"—"And sent it to the elders by the hands of Barabas and Saul"—"They ordained them elders in every city"—"The apostles and elders came together"—"The apostles, elders, and brethren, greeting"—"They delivered the decrees ordained of the elders"—"That thou shouldest ordain elders in every city"—"Let him call for the elders of the church"—"The deacons must be grave"—"Let them use the office of a deacon"—"Let the deacon

be the husband of one wife." Minister, in the New Testament, is deacon in the original. Paul says he was made a minister, (deacon,) and he thanks God for putting him into the ministry, (deaconship.) In the Acts the apostleship is also called a bishoprick, though the apostles never call themselves bishops; and it is well known to every body that bishops are never named in conjunction or disjunction with elders, though they are conjoined with deacons. In Timothy, the qualifications of bishops and deacons are enumerated; but nothing is said of the qualifications of elders. In Peter, the elders are to take the oversight. In the Acts, the Holy Ghost makes the bishops of the elders. It must needs create some surprise to those who are not aware of the fact, that an office which makes such a figure in church history, an office which has swallowed up all others, or thrown them into the back ground, should have been so seldom mentioned by the sacred writers. In the Epistle of the Romans, it is not found; nor in Corinthians; nor Ephesians; nor Galatians; nor Thessalonians; and but twice in the Acts of the Apostles.

We will now proceed to search for the principle of the primitive government, as found in the examples recorded in the New Testament.

In the Acts of the Apostles there is a circumstantial account of the manner in which the controversy between the judaizing teachers and Paul and Barnabas was decided. "When, therefore, Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them (the certain men who came from Jerusalem) they (the brethren) determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain others of them (their own body) should go up to Jerusalem, unto the apostles and elders, about this question. How were the certain others of them selected? Did Paul and Barnabas choose them, or did they offer their own services, or were they chosen by the brethren who were vexed? Nothing but the most positive evidence to the contrary ought to influence any man to imagine that the latter mode was not adopted in preference to the two former. But if it was, then, there were delegates, or representatives in this case: "And when they were come to Jerusalem they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders. And the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. And when there was much disputing, Peter rose and said, men and brethren,—then all the multitude kept silence, and gave au-

dience to Barnabas and Paul. James said, men and brethren hearken unto me. Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church." The vote was unanimous without a dissenting voice. The address of the letter is, "The apostles, elders, and brethren, greeting, unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles, in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia." These newly planted churches of Gentile converts refer an important dispute, which was occasioned by certain men who came *from* Jerusalem, to *that* mother church. The church and its office-bearers, as well as the apostles, all meet, and all vote; and they write back, "that it seemed good unto the Holy Ghost, and unto us." It would seem that there were no upper house in those days, nor closed doors.

This was not a general council, nor a general conference, it is true; and it is equally true, that they did not write their letter to the universal church, but to the brethren of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia, who had written to them. The whole of this transaction deserves to be studied with great care and attention. Neither the judaizing teachers, nor the brethren, seem to have entertained very awful notions of apostolic supremacy in this instance. And whatever may have been the actual power of apostles in such matters, it is certain that the great apostle to the Gentiles, and his colleague, the son of consolation, interposed no legislative prerogatives to the exclusion of the elders and brethren. The multitude kept silence only while Peter and Paul and Barnabas and James were speaking, neither of whom, it would seem, took the floor, until an advanced stage of the debate, for there had been much disputing before Peter arose. The church, in the whole business, is contradistinguished from the apostles and elders, so that it is impossible for the art of man to confound them. The parent church at Jerusalem did not volunteer in this affair, but acted by particular request. Rome seems to have had no more to do with it than Geneva, or Canterbury, or Baltimore.

The next memorable case we shall examine, is the excommunication of the incestuous Corinthian; in which, it is notable, that the church of Corinth was wrong, in not putting away that person from among them; and, of course, might have put him away, without the knowledge of St. Paul. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned that he who hath done this deed, might be taken away.

from among you:" they "should have purged out the old leaven." He directs, therefore, that "when ye are gathered together." The church, it seems, then, had to convene, in order to put away that wicked person. Neither the judgment or spirit of Paul, with the power of the Lord Jesus, was sufficient, without the form of a trial before the church. Nor was this a novel or unprecedented case. "Doth our law condemn a man before it hear him?"—"Tell it unto the church." Men should be tried by their peers. Let a case be ever so notorious, the right to be tried before our peers remains inviolable. Mark well! *There is not one example in all the New Testament, of apostles, bishops, or any other description of church officers, trying and expelling church members, without the aid or co-operation of a church; nor of apostles, elders, or churches legislating, or making laws for any church, without its consent.* And, as these acts are *wrong* in themselves, it would be *unjust* and *cruel* to attribute them to the apostles, elders, and primitive christians, without *positive* evidence. When St. Paul says, "He will not spare," &c. he does not mean that he will act over the heads of the judicial authority, which actually existed in the church; but has fully shewn his meaning in the case already quoted. "When ye are gathered together with my spirit;" that is, judgment. If the facts prove to be, as they have been stated to me, he ought to be excommunicated. Cruden says, "tell it unto the church," means elders, and so says Mr. Wesley; does it follow, if he hears not the elders—then, it seems, that the elders might settle the matter, not only without the church, but without the apostles or bishops. These notions have no logical coherence. The case is plain, the whole proceeding is to be understood judicially. The functionaries or organs of the church, as such, are to be applied to, that the church may act legally and formally upon the case, and not be superseded in its judgment.

The seven churches in Asia, are next to be considered. No doubt can be entertained but that much of the language used in these communications is figurative, and that the number seven is selected to accommodate the hieroglyphical characters employed in those countries. The seven candlesticks, or chandeliers, which thou sawest, are seven churches, and the seven stars or lamps, are seven angels, (O! if they had but been bishops, what a deal of labor it would have saved some commentators.) Yet, had it been

so, *our* church writers would have been mightily put to it to make seven bishops out of three, and to reduce seven churches into one. In a book so evidently figurative as the Revelations, it cannot offend the most fastidious reader to argue, that we are not to expect to find the details of church government; but even when a particular number is put for a general or indefinite one, we look in vain for a hierarchy. Seven cities have seven churches, and seven churches have seven angels. In one of these cities and churches, we know that in St. Paul's time, there were bishops, made such by the Holy Ghost; and as the apostles used to ordain elders in every city, and in every church, and we have no reason to believe that the apostles innovated upon their own plans, are we not fairly authorised to infer that matters were nearly on the same footing in Ephesus, and other cities in Asia Minor, when John wrote to the churches there, as they were when Paul was at Miletus?

Another principle of great importance, which we are to search for in the New Testament, if it be not given or revealed, is, respecting the manner in which the officers of the churches were originally selected. But concerning the apostles, properly so called, there can be no question, their very name imports their immediate commission from the head of the church; and all the particulars of their being chosen by the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as their very names, are circumstantially recorded by the evangelists. When one was to be ordained to be a witness, with the eleven, of the resurrection, in the place of Judas, they appointed two, and they prayed, and said, thou Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this (*dikonia*s) ministry and apostleship, and they gave forth their lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. This must be regarded as a very important transaction, and is entitled to a careful examination in reference to the famous question of the apostolic succession. Has any other succession of any one apostle been so chosen? An apostle, it is plain, could not be chosen even by the apostolic college (as some writers are wont to call it.) The ministry and apostleship, from which Judas, by transgression, fell, was filled up by the Lord himself. May it not be presumed, that vacancies happened from time to time by death, and yet, in all the New Testament, not the least intimation is given of any successor having

been appointed. In the case of Paul, who is a thirteenth apostle, the immediate choice of God is abundantly evident. "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.) But, when it pleased God to reveal his Son in me,—immediately, I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me—then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter—and I was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea, which were in Christ." No lots appear to have been cast, that he who knew the hearts of all men might shew which of the evangelists he had chosen to fill the places, from which, apostles by martyrdom, or natural death, had been removed. No one among them, like Paul, had seen the Lord Jesus in a miraculous manner, after his resurrection. Evangelists are mentioned, in three places, in the New Testament: "We entered the house of Philip, the evangelist"—"He gave some evangelists"—"Do the work of an evangelist." There seems to be some evidence that they were selected by the apostles themselves; but they had the approbation of the elders also. "A certain disciple was there, named Timotheus—him Paul would have to go forth with him"—"Unto Timothy my own son in the faith—as I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus. This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to prophecies, which went before on thee—Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy and the laying on of the hands of the (elders) presbytery—stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

Evangelists seem to have been qualified for their extraordinary office of helpers to the apostles, by supernatural gifts, and to have done all the duties common to apostles, except the identical, and essential ones, of bearing witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of writing scripture. That they bore an important part in planting, and establishing churches, is evident; but how many of them there were, or whether they all continued in their office for life or not, the scripture is silent. It can only be logically inferred, that the secondary office ceased with its principal. When the churches were planted, and the canon of scripture was completed; or in other words, when precepts and examples were furnished, in sufficient number, for the direction and government of the churches, these

extraordinary officers ceased, and the ordinary pastors and teachers continued the work of the ministry, edifying the body of Christ—and perfecting the saints, just as the same description of officers do now; for now there is not a successor of an apostle, or an evangelist, upon the face of the earth. Modern ministers of the gospel are successors to the powers and prerogatives of the ancient pastors and teachers; and if any among them pretend to any thing more, sooner or later, they will be convicted of ignorance or error. The earliest case on record in the pentecostal dispensation, of a regular election, is in the iv. of the Acts: “Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples, and said, it is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables; wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, &c. &c. whom they set before the apostles, and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them.” Here, it is worthy of remark, that the apostles did not even nominate. Of the manner in which the elders were chosen we have no account; but as it is clear from the above passage, that the laying on of hands, and of course ordaining, does not imply, or include the choosing of the men, is it not to be inferred that the multitude chose or elected, in the one case, as well as in the other? May it not be reasonably presumed, that one cause why the New Testament is so silent upon the subject of the election of elders or bishops, is that it is a mere common sense process? The qualifications for the office being stated, as they are, in a very full and detailed manner, nothing but a positive prohibition, from divine authority, should prevent churches from choosing or electing their own officers.

In searching for scripture principles of church government, the divisions which are noticed in scripture, must not be overlooked. In St. Paul’s charge to the elders of Ephesus, divisions are anticipated. I know, says he, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock; also of yourselves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. From Miletus, Paul had sent and called these elders of the church (of Ephesus;) but he says not one word about the

supremacy, or of his successor. Query, were all these elders, who were to take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers, to feed the flock of God at Ephesus, nearly, if not quite, on a footing of equality? If not, why did St. Paul address them on a subject of such moment without saying one word by way of inculcating subordination to their superior? What did those "of themselves" do in order to draw away disciples after them? Must they not have risen to eminence, and claimed precedence? That is, have labored to destroy the equality which existed among themselves? Observe, St. Paul foresees that bishops will draw away disciples from bishops! He might also have safely predicted, that the same process would take place elsewhere.

In Corinth, schisms did actually take place; and this same apostle labors to correct them. "One said I am of Paul, and another I of Cephas, and another I am of Apollos. So it seems, that there were some in the church at Corinth who preferred Apollos before two of the most conspicuous of the apostles. Could this fact have happened, in any human probability, if they had been as well schooled in the doctrine of supremacy as some moderns are? Or if St. Paul himself had maintained that doctrine, was not this a fair and proper occasion for the application of it? And yet, so far is he from saying one word to this point, that he does every thing to the contrary. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos! but ministers by whom ye believed." In the New Testament, it is true, we find not many maxims and axioms of church government; but their paucity is abundantly compensated for, by a most plentiful supply of examples. The New Testament teaches religious liberty and equality by example; the best mode, it is said, of teaching in the world. I have read this book over and over; I have compared it with itself, and endeavored to analyze its parts, and I must declare, that I cannot find one single example or principle of ministerial supremacy, on any of its pages. To my ear, it speaks one uniform language, and that is, "not that we have dominion over your faith; but are helpers of your joy." If any man have eyes, or ears, to see, or hear, any thing to the contrary, truly I envy him not.

DOKEMASIUS.

No. 17.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. II. October 1822, No. VI.

A review of the subject of disagreement between the members of the General Conference of 1820, upon the presiding elder question.

"Life is short, and art is long," is a maxim applicable to principles and doctrines; for these too, die not with the body. The saying, measures not men is worthy of adoption in this case, as the moral and religious characters of the men, on either side, need not be implicated. Some of the preachers who are opposed to any change, consider "the conciliation" as an entering wedge; grant this, say they, and more will be demanded. This slowness of heart to believe, that men can be induced to give up in part what they contend for upon principle, bears little affinity to a confidence in the sincerity of brethren. The preachers, on the contrary, who contend that the annual conferences ought to have a voice in the election of presiding elders, though they yield the power to nominate, to the bishops; while they admit and deplore the tendency of power to beguile the judgments, both of those who profess and those who advocate it, look forward to future men, and future times, and in the changes which will bring untried men into office, they see the danger of leaving uncontrollable power in undiminished force. The weight of their arguments have, therefore, been directed to consequences, in order, if possible, to bring the present advocates for existing prerogatives, to reflect how easily, and effectually this potent weapon might, in skilful and ambitious hands, be converted to the most pernicious uses. With them it is measures, not men. They conceive that it is sufficient ground for their fears, that the existing powers may be abused to an indefinite extent; and with them, also, it is matter of serious consideration, that no temptation to ambition is greater than opportunity. Samuel himself, did not more carefully warn the Israelites of the nature and consequences of a monarchy, than these preachers have warned their brethren of the danger of absolute power in the hands of bishops, yet to come into existence, under unforeknown circumstances, and in unforeseen events.

The address of the senior bishop did not anticipate the arguments employed in the Baltimore Annual Conference,

neither did its friends and supporters give a direct and satisfactory answer to those arguments which were employed against it. Among a number of reasons in favor of the powers of a General Conference, to alter the present rule, the following seem to be too important to be overlooked, viz: "They," (the General Conference) says the third resolution, "shall not change or alter any part, or rule of our government, *so as* to do away episcopacy, or to destroy the plan of our itinerant general superintendency." May not (said the speaker) this restriction be construed so as to mean they may change or alter any part, or rule of our government *so as not* to do away episcopacy, or to destroy the plan of our itinerant general superintendency? That is, the General Conference may change, or alter any part, or rule of our government which relates to episcopacy; they may change, or alter any part, or rule of our government which relates to our general superintendency; but they shall not do away the first, nor destroy the second. Many kinds, and degrees of changes, or alterations may take place, without doing away, or destroying the things changed, or altered. The words *so as*, do evidently admit of changes, or alterations, at the same time that they limit them; for it is in the nature of a conjunction to have two things to unite or disjoin. If the plan of our itinerant superintendency should be made local, it would be destroyed—if the plan of our general superintendency should be made particular, it would be destroyed; for it is inconsistent with our plan for a bishop to reside, or hold his court in one place, as the bishop of Rome or pope does. And it is also inconsistent with our plan for our bishops to have particular provinces or dioceses, as the archbishop of Canterbury, or the bishop of London, &c. If, therefore, the General Conference should abolish the order of bishops, or fix their residence and court at one place, or limit their superintendency to any particular part of the connexion, it would do away episcopacy, and destroy the plan of our itinerant general superintendency. Now, the change or alteration which was agreed to in the General Conference of 1820, in that part or rule of our government which relates to presiding elders, was not intended, nor was it calculated to do away episcopacy or to destroy the plan of our itinerant general superintendency. No other construction can be given to the restriction, unless the whole stress and emphasis be laid upon *plan*; but if this rule of interpretation is to be admit-

ted to such an extent as to prevent the General Conference from altering the rule, which provides for the choice of presiding elders, it must be extended to every part or rule of our government, for the restriction is not concerning the choice of presiding elders in particular, and of course the General Conference would have nothing to do. The word change, or alter, is not equivalent to, or synonymous with do away or destroy. It is not the plan in the abstract, but the plan of our superintendency, which is expressly defined by the two adjectives, itinerant and general. The sense (said the speaker) given to the restriction by our opponents, requires that it should read "they shall not change, or alter, or destroy any part, or rule of our government, which relates to the existing powers of the bishops, &c.

From this specimen of the arguments which were used in favor of the power of the General Conference to agree to the conciliation plan, and those used against the address were no less conclusive, how was it possible for those preachers who heard them, to hesitate to award to those who professed to act under a conviction of their truth, the virtue, of sincerity? Is the fallacy of this reasoning so glaring and palpable, that those who profess to believe it involve themselves in the dilemma of having their heads or their hearts impeached?

Should the conciliation be finally rejected, the preachers must needs divide into two great parties; one of whom will be bound, upon their own principles, to maintain that they have a right to control the majority, in all cases in which, in their judgment, a question becomes constitutional. But the other, viz: the one who believe that it is in the power of the General Conference to make the presiding elders elective, will only expect to govern while they are a majority.

Let us now suppose that this last party find themselves to be an actual majority in the delegation, and the episcopacy, will they in General Conference, or on any question on which they have no doubt of their power to act, and without a single letter in the discipline to prevent their acting, submit to be governed by a minority? But if a minority should refuse to obey, have they not sufficient means to coerce them? Could they not refuse to elect a bishop, or elect one or more of their own opinion, &c. &c.

No reasonable objection can be urged against a free discussion of any question in the annual conferences; but is

not the present plan of requiring them to vote upon the proceedings of the General Conference both useless and dangerous? The prudence of the Baltimore annual conference, in indefinitely postponing the question, will be evident to every one who reflects upon the nature of a representative legislature, who like the General Conference, is composed of the delegates of the preachers. This body of men must needs be supposed to be bound to act according to the judgment of the majority, for it must finally come to this point, that the General Conference, in their collective capacity, must judge what is constitutional, and what is not. This apparatus of voting by annual conferences, it is to be hoped, is not intended to forestall or prevent a free election, or to bind delegates to vote in General Conference according to a past, and not a present judgment. In 1824 a majority of the delegates may be fully convinced that the plan of conciliation was not only not inconsistent with the third resolution, but as expedient as it is lawful. However the General Conference may err, it is certain that its members never can act right while their understandings are fettered and bewildered by the clashing and contrary dictation of a number of separate bodies of men, whose opinions are collected from the extremities of the continent in the course of a year and a half or two years. Instead of the voting system, it would be well to act under the maxim "give us but light." The most dangerous crisis which can happen to us, is to set up and establish a minority with constitutional claims and pretensions, in opposition to a majority. No schisms and divisions are so fatal and incurable as this kind. Majorities are formidable bodies, and whoever succeeds in controlling them must become usurpers and masters. He must have a superficial knowledge of human nature indeed, who can persuade himself to believe that a majority will be compelled, contrary to their own deliberate judgment, to submit to a minority.

Those who suppose that there is a deep laid scheme on the part of those who wish for a change in the manner of choosing presiding elders, entirely mistake the nature of the case. Those men only act up to their judgment of lawfulness and expediency. If they cannot convince their brethren that they are right, and thus secure a majority in the General Conference, they are willing to be governed by the majority.

In reviewing this subject nothing produces more surprise

and regret than the proceeding of the bishop elect, and the subsequent measures of the senior bishop; who, as has been unanswerably shewn by the ablest speakers, had not one jot or tittle of authority from the discipline to bear them out. But, even if they had, as they no doubt thought that they had, a legal right to interfere with the decision of the General Conference, it is difficult to conceive how they could have been more injudicious in the choice of their times and means. As the bishop elect was present, the obvious and easy course, one would think, must have presented itself to his mind, to state his doubts and those of the senior bishop (if he was too much indisposed to do it himself) that the motion was a violation of the third resolution. This question might have thus been fully discussed and settled, and all further debates and heart burning prevented. Whereas, in the wrong end foremost manner in which this business has been managed, principles and feelings are inextricably involved; passions and prejudices have had an opportunity to insinuate themselves, and to perplex and bewilder the understanding. When we take into consideration the well known celebrity of these two men, not only for the virtues of the heart, but for acuteness of perception, depth and soundness of judgment, the most probable solution of the case will, perhaps, be in the supposition, that they some how or other, were led to believe that matters would not come to such a crisis, as to oblige them to act at all. The regrets which are felt, are heightened by the cordial affection, which has been long cherished towards the venerable man, who has for a series of years presided over the conferences with so much dignity, and whose praise from an early period, was in all the churches; the respect for his junior friend and confident also, is in full proportion to his years and standing, as an able and faithful minister of the New Testament. It would afford the most sensible gratification to be able to anticipate, that the historian will find himself in possession of ample data, to present these transactions in the most favorable light; but with present facts and evidences, we have not the means of exonerating them from all departure from the rules of prudence; nor can we perceive, how the consequences can be avoided, unless they shall say, we were mistaken.

The dread that has often been expressed, of the evils of elections, may now give place to a much greater one. The office as well as the officers, is now likely to be involved in

the danger. Voting against the acts of the General Conference, instead of the men who acted, cannot fail to produce a weak and wavering confidence in that body, if it does not destroy it altogether. It is well worthy of the most serious attention of the senior bishop, and those who act in concert with him, that the plan they are pursuing is a precedent favorable to the purposes of ambitious and artful bishops, who will have nothing to dread but the power of the General Conference. A bishop being elected for life, and being amenable to no other tribunal, can more readily and effectually destroy the influence of the General Conference, by dividing it among the annual conferences than by any other means. He can thus prevent new restrictions from being imposed upon himself, and corrupt his judges. Behold! now the consequences of a precedent, and the little avail of the goodness of intention in those who produced it. The oldest bishop set the example—the ice is broken—the minds of the preachers are familiarized with episcopal opposition to the General Conference, and prepared to co-operate. But it will be asked, if there be nothing to fear from the General Conference? Why should those who elect its members, fear its power, when they can change them once in four years? If a fatal necessity were imposed upon the preachers to go to some extreme in this matter, it would be the safer one to give too much, rather than too little power to their delegates. The General Conference is not like the federal government of the United States, as soon as its session closes it ceases to be, and its statutes go into the hands of the annual conferences. Even the bishops, as has been made to appear, have no other responsibility to the General Conference, but that of a criminal to a judge, and of course, as their temptation to violate the laws increase, their regard for their judges must be weakened. The errors of the General Conference are provided against, as far as they may respect the preachers, by a periodical election; but how is the General Conference to correct the errors of the annual conferences? By the bishops. How by them, if they form a coalition? Were the bishops subject to a re-election once in four years, then indeed the General Conference might have some hold upon the skirts of their garments.

In concluding this review it seems proper once more to admonish travelling preachers not to take the name of a constitution in vain. Their third restriction upon

their delegates is one thing, and a constitution a very different one. They may be entreated, also, to have some regard to their own personal reputation, and the reputation of the common cause. A pompous display of powers and prerogatives, to which they are much prone, is only calculated to make them objects of derision and contempt, among their fellow citizens. Lastly, it may be well to remind these sensitive brethren, who are so tremblingly alive to the encroachments of their own delegates, to reflect a moment how those must feel who have neither elections nor delegates!

This review, it is to be hoped, will be deemed sufficiently moderate and temperate to convince those who detect its mistakes, that they were not intentional.

QUORUM PARS FUI.

No. 18.

Wealeyan Repository, vol. ii. December, 1822, No. viii. page 296.

The Reformer.

Of all the unmutilated works of ancient art, the Apollo Belvidere is the most admired. This statue is said to be the production of Agasius of Ephesus. The Abbe Winkelman, whose fine taste in the antique is so celebrated, gives it almost more than mortal praise. Those connoisseurs who saw it while it remained at the Louvre, say that the imitations and drawings give no adequate idea of its beauties. The Apollo Belvidere, has no passions. No veins and muscles are visible. The artist has transfused the idea of life into the marble, without the aid of lungs, and nerves, and circulating blood. It is the masterly expression of this divine conception of vitality, which tempts even modern men of science to become idolaters. Now this is our conception of the character of a Reformer. He should have no passions. His whole soul should be animated not with heated blood; nor the effervescence of a controversial temper; but in a kind of divine and heavenly manner, by an all vivifying love of truth. According to the conception of the Ephesian artist, his arms, his bow and arrows, should only be employed in destroying the amphibious serpent of error.

The motto of the Repository should be, "not as though we had already obtained, or were already perfect; but we follow after, that we may apprehend." Among so great a number of writers, it would be strange indeed, if there were nothing human; no pets; no paroxysms. But the travelling brethren say, that they dislike the spirit in which the work is conducted. The spirit in which most of the essays in the Repository are written, is professedly a discriminating spirit. The intention and aim of the writers are to make a distinction between men's personal virtues, and the defects or excesses of their system. This is so very like the spirit of wisdom and impartiality, that it pleases us well, and we only regret that we have not more of it. We wish ever to cherish that spirit, which may enable us to see the faults of those we love, and our own too. We caught our first idea of a perfect Reformer from our own dear Wesley. The difference in the points to be reformed ought not, surely, to make any change in the spirit of those who take a part in this arduous work. Our leading object is, to reform or change the opinions of travelling preachers and others among us, respecting church government. Now, we desire to know whether it be possible to do this in such a spirit as will please those who endeavor to perpetuate existing opinions? What thanks did Wesley ever gain by refusing to separate from the Church of England; or, rather, what censure and reproach did he not get? Is it not our spirit of courage which our brethren so greatly dislike? Do they not begin to dread the introduction of this spirit into the sanctuary—the General Conference? Certainly, the love of liberty, and the spirit of martyrdom, are not extinguished in the bosoms of all our travelling preachers. No, we hope we know better things of them, and things which accompany a glorious independence of soul. If there are not found majorities in the annual conferences, at the next election, who spurn the idea of making laws for others without their consent, minorities will be found so weighty, as to make the boldest champions for supremacy pause and reflect.

We felicitate the friends and patrons of the Repository, upon a growing disposition among its writers, to propagate or combat only principles, and to avoid as much as may be personalities; and this disposition is the more pleasing, as it is spontaneous. It augurs well, when men in distant places, unknown to each other, and without any pre-con-

cert, see so nearly eye to eye. Let us go on, commending our love to our brethren, and giving praise where praise is due, at the very time we may be obliged to force the light of ecclesiastical liberty upon them against their will. We covet not the title of Reformers, but if it be given to us let us merit it.

If the ruling men in our church shall be so devoid of political wisdom and discernment, as never to rise above the first conceptions of the Nimrods of the earth, upon the subject of government; and all who feel or dread the iron yoke of despotism, can perceive no remedy but separation, our case will be deplorable indeed. To the faults of our system, as honest men, we must plead guilty; and of course, as honest men, we are bound to use our endeavors to reform or correct them. But it seems that our brethren esteem us as enemies, because we tell them what we conceive to be the truth. O this is grievous, but we must bear it! Well we will give them a text, and let them try to convince us of our faults.—“And ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” O no! you are not our servants at all. We are your servants for the sake of your power. You are far above us; quite out of our reach. We cannot say to one of you come; or go; or do this; or that; and if we ask you to let us go with you, we are scorned and refused. O brethren be not high minded, but fear! New attacks by those whom you excommunicate, or those who withdraw from you, will be made with redoubled violence upon your vulnerable side, your unbounded and undivided power. James II. when his affairs came to a crisis, asked old lord Russell, whose son he had caused to be beheaded, what could be done? I once, said the old man, had a son who could have served you. Brethren, the time will come when you will need all the help you can obtain.

DOXEMASTUS.

No. 19.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. II. December, 1822, No. viii. page 299.

Thoughts on the primitive manner of appointing and supporting Preachers.

Humbly inscribed to the Episcopacy of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

“When I sent you forth without purse, or scrip, lacked ye any thing? And they said, nothing, Lord?” Mr. At-

more tells us of one of the earliest of the English Methodist preachers, who continued to travel until he wore out all his clothes; but in those days it was customary for the stewards to ask the preachers if they needed any thing, &c.; but none of them took the hint from his tattered garments, and it seems he had too much independence or diffidence to say as Socrates once did in the presence of his disciples: If I had the means, I would buy me a new cloak; he was left to the alternative of going naked, or going in debt, and to jail, or to go to work and earn money. The story bears that he chose the latter; and this Mr. Atmore would fain make out to be a great sin, with which the Lord was so displeased, that he punished him with the loss of the power and comfort of religion, and finally, with death in a prison sure enough.

The stewards and the people, from all that appears to the contrary, suffered no such fearful punishment, though Mr. Atmore thinks, they were quite culpable. But where was Mr. Wesley all this while, who had appointed this man to preach, upon the principle that, if he did not help him as he directed, he should not help him at all? Why did he not ask whether he lacked any thing? If upon Mr. Atmore's hypothesis, there must needs be sin in this business, is it not demonstrable that it lay at the door of the employer? Jesus Christ did not trust to stewards to ask this important question; he asked it himself. If you labor among us, says our discipline, you must serve as a son in the gospel, and do that part of the work which we (the *bishops*) direct. But the bishops are not bound to ask the question, lacked ye any thing? Nor if all the travelling preachers go naked, or starve, or locate to earn food and raiment, are they in any wise responsible. No, indeed, who would be bishop upon such a condition? If the example of the shepherd and bishop of our souls is to be regarded, no man ought to take it upon himself, or to be appointed by others, to send men to preach, without being bound to see that they are provided for. When men make pens for themselves, we ought not to be surprised if they leave a hole big enough to get out at. Let us suppose that the bishop should write a circular to the church to this effect: "Brethren, you have made it my duty to station all the preachers, and they are bound to do that part of the work which I direct. I have asked all of them whether they lacked any thing, and I find that some of them have

no clothes, and that their families are in a naked and starving condition. Now, if you do not provide for them, or put means into my hands to do so, I must either resign my commission, or advise them to locate, &c.; for, as a christian bishop, I must be given to hospitality; nay, as a man, I must be just and humane; and it seems to me to be a violation of justice and humanity, for me to appoint men to work and leave them to live on the winds of heaven."

Again, let us suppose that the church should answer this letter as follows: "Dear father, &c. your circular has been received and duly considered, and the result of all our inquiry into the state of the case is, a clear and decisive proof that we have not had, and it is not intended that we shall ever have, any part, or lot in this matter. We neither made you bishop, nor can we unmake you. We gave you no power, nor can we take any away from you. The church whose name you and all travelling preachers derive your consequence from, is a mere name. If you can make our purses hear, without speaking through us to them, well and good; but, if they are quite deaf to all your intreaties, let us come into your legislative councils, and we will represent them, and hear for them, and speak for them.

A STEWARD OF THE MAMMON OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.

No. 26.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. ii. December, 1822, No. viii. page 209.

Letters to a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

No. I.

DEAR BROTHER,

It was a maxim, as you may recollect, of the founder of Methodism, that he loved to have, and to do, every thing openly: and a greater than he, had said long before him, that nothing should be kept secret, &c. So you see that your complaints against the writers for the Repository, are not altogether unanswerable; as, they may plead precedent. Anonymous essays, in a periodical publication, involving men's lives and characters, would, I acknowledge, be infinitely improper; and no less so, are censures upon characters from the pulpit. Every man ought to know his accuser, and to have a proper tribunal before which to vindicate himself, and to produce his evidence. I am often scanda-

lized at the facility with which some of our brethren receive the written, or verbal censures, which strangers circulate against those who have exercised discipline upon them hundreds of miles distant. But with matters of opinion, the case is different. All theoretical subjects can be as well discussed, perhaps better, without the knowledge of, or the presence of the writers, than with them. The book of discipline, and our church government, are no secrets. We have no secrets to be revealed, like the initiated in ancient times, to whom our Lord probably alluded. And we attach no infallibility to our General Conference.

As for what you say of the venerable men to whom we look up as fathers and founders, as they thought proper to abandon all theories, and to establish our church polity upon the summary process of "*I will and you shall*," it does not seem to me, that the shadow of any great name, or any lapse of time, or accumulation of patronage, can entitle them, on this account, in an age distinguished for political science, to much deference. Men, who, instead of governing upon principle, thought proper to be governed by circumstances, and the resources of their own genius, can claim little right to establish precedents. Nothing is more notorious than our propensity, from the beginning, to appeal to our success, rather than to abstract reasons for our vindication. And every body knows that the success of all the great conquerors of the earth, is the charter of their successors. It is, indeed, beyond all doubt, that any leader, in church or state, with absolute authority, can do more than if he were fettered by system; and yet, it is a universally admitted fact, that no governments are so liable to sink under their own weight, as absolute ones. The ancient Romans had their temporary dictators in the emergencies of the state; but, when the dictatorship became perpetual, their liberties were lost forever.

Mr. A. I know, was as sincere as he was indefatigable in his endeavors to make the hierarchy independent on the people; but he was my father, and we agreed to disagree. It was always a mystery to me, how a man of his great reading and penetrating views of men and things, could so entirely lose sight of the danger of an unbalanced government. Of the ability of Mr. Wesley to govern, no one has a more exalted opinion than myself; but, who will say that his system was the best that could have been devised? Mr. Locke understood the science of government much better

than Mr. W.; though the latter had the benefit of the writings of the former. Upon the maxim, "Necessity is the mother of invention," it might be argued, that men of the greatest talents for governing, would be less apt to invent or make discoveries in the science, than others of fewer resources in themselves. I can never be brought to believe that it argues any extraordinary sagacity in men, to take for themselves and their successors, as much power to do good as is possible, without any regard to the power which it would give them to do evil. Nothing is more evident, than that this latter object never entered into the plans of our predecessors. To this day, it makes no part of our discipline. Travelling preachers have no check from any body, but themselves.

Yours, &c.

P. P.

No. 21.

Wesleyan Repository vol. ii. December, 1822. No. viii. page 314.

The Addresses contrasted: 1st—To the Representatives of the Preachers only. 2nd—To the Delegates of the Preachers and Members. By the Presidents of the General Conferences.

To the Delegates of the Travelling Preachers, and those Preachers who only travel from one station to another, once in two years.

DEAR BRETHREN,

You are now assembled in General Conference to represent all the travelling preachers in full connexion on this vast continent, and of course all the Methodist Episcopal Church. This being "the order which God hath established in his church;"* it behooves you to beware of "those restless spirits, prompted by pride and vain conceit of their own abilities, who rebel against the order God hath established, and thus rebel against GOD."† In the blessed times of priestly supremacy in Europe, that pious land of our forefathers, under the christian emperors of Rome, both in the west and in the east, and likewise under its modern sovereigns and governments, those "ministers whom God selected to be the shepherds of his flock, and the guardians of his people, possessing the right of governing themselves

* See "Vindication of Methodist Episcopacy."

† Ibid.

in religious matters, and all those committed to their care,"* had the means of punishing all the "people, who were bound to submit to their authority in all matters of church government and discipline"† if they rebelled; but in this land, our civil rulers suffer those "restless spirits" to "rebel" against us with impunity. Thus, brethren, you see, that though we claim a divine and indefeasible right, to govern christians without their consent, as well as the Pope, and our other predecessors, yet there is no secular arm in this country to punish "rebels" against the domination of preachers, but they must be left to "receive their own punishment."‡ I mention these things, lest in your zeal to emulate holy priests, whether Roman or Reformed, you might forget that circumstances alter cases, and begin to wield those spiritual thunders which used to strike so much terror into the hearts of the "proud and vain conceited of their own abilities." Bear it in mind, then, brethren, that there is not in the political elements of this country, electricity enough to give effect to spiritual thunder; but that it dies like a harmless sound upon the lips of those who utter it. We may therefore spare this useless breath, while with a tenacity worthy of the successors of those who have claimed undivided power over the church in every age, we refuse to give up one jot or tittle of it into the hands of the christians.

THE PRESIDENT.

Address to the Delegates of the Ministers and Members of the Church.

DEAR BRETHREN,

Permit me on this occasion to congratulate you on the continuance of our civil and religious rights and privileges. This day we can not only join in the *Te Deum*, and sing, "the noble army of martyrs praise thee," but we their children praise thee! Brethren, I hail you as the children of the martyrs.

If aught beneath them, happy souls attend,
let them look down from their blessed abodes, and witness the glorious fruits of their blood among us, who sit together in this mansion of liberty and love. If we cannot realize

* See "Vindication of Methodist Episcopacy."

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

the wish of Moses, that all the Lord's people were prophets, they are all legislators! all kings! JESUS CHRIST hath made them free indeed! To those delegates who sustain the ministerial character, and through them to their brethren, whom they represent, I feel constrained to say well done! You have, my brethren, the proofs around you, that you are the dispensers of power, not the monopolizers. God be praised, that you have these witnesses to demonstrate that you have taught the brethren liberty, and not to use liberty as an occasion to the flesh. Your converts are not in bondage to you, nor are they converts of licentiousness and anarchy, but of law and order. These delegates of the church, who sit on this floor upon a footing of legislative equality with you, enjoying a power you have voluntarily surrendered to them, will vindicate you from all charges of priestly ambition and love of domination, and inspire the public mind with a confidence in your regard for religious liberty, which shall go on increasing as long as the church continues to be represented.

Christian delegates, your ministerial brethren are Christians in common with you, and as such you might represent each other's interest reciprocally; but they have an office which you cannot fully represent, and as this office exposes them to a temptation to make your interests subservient to theirs, they cannot safely be trusted on all occasions, and under all circumstances, to represent you. Your constituents have rights and privileges which they cannot alienate or transfer to others. So long as by-laws and rules are necessary for the government of a church, (and they must not contravene the principles laid down in the New Testament) and so long as religious liberties may be jeopardised by those who shall make those by-laws and rules, so long will the church be sacredly bound to hold its law-makers responsible to itself. You see, then, what an important trust is committed to you, and how great is your responsibility. You are the natural guardians of the liberties of your brethren; as all the laws to which you here assent, must act upon yourselves, and it is fairly presumed that you will not make laws to injure your own selves. The case is different with your ministers, if you should leave the power in their hands, they might oppress you with heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, without touching them with one of their fingers. There have not been wanting those, who say that the church has neither ability, nor disposition to

take care of its own rights, and therefore it is a matter of necessity, that the ministry should do this work for them. You have now an opportunity to prove the truth or the falsehood of this charge, as far as it respects yourselves; and, I trust, brethren, that you will shew to them, and to the world, that you are neither wanting in wisdom nor in will, to take care of this inestimable treasure, which next to the gospel of the grace of God, ought to be dear to every good man's heart.

And now, brethren, in order that I may fulfil the important duties assigned me, as the president of this deliberative body, rules and orders must be strictly and religiously regarded. We must all be bound by them. I now entreat you while we are cool, to coerce the chair by them, if in the heat of debate, it forgets what is due to impartiality.

THE PRESIDENT.

No. 22.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. ii. December, 1822, No. viii. page 316.

Thoughts on serving Two Masters.

"No man can serve two masters," &c. To most of our local preachers it has been matter of surprise, that the members of our church should, in many instances, manifest not only indifference toward their order, but something like contempt and hatred also. They do not consider that the travelling preachers are the actual masters of the church; and that the members of the church are so conscious of this, that they naturally associate the idea of two masters with the two orders, itinerant and local; and in so far as they hold to the former, they will despise the latter. Now, if it is really a fact that the local preachers have the same notion of ministerial prerogative, upon which the government of our church is founded, they are indeed only another race of masters; and if the members of the church should by any means come to love them, the travelling preachers would have to take their place. It behooves all the local preachers deeply to consider this point. Every man among them who defends the divine right of preachers to make laws for the church, and to govern it without its consent, is a master of the church in principle, and ought to be regarded by the members of the church as such.

It is a duty, therefore, which those local preachers who hold to the rights of the church, owe to themselves and their brethren, to avow their principles, as they have no other way of extricating themselves from this dilemma of two masters.

It is a curious and interesting fact, in the history of all absolute governments, that though they are more subject to convulsions and revolutions than any other, yet the people are never benefited, they only experience a change of masters. The members of our church would gain nothing by substituting local rulers of the same principles as the travelling ones, in their place; they would only forsake the one and hold to the other. It behooves our local preachers, to a man, to imbibe just and liberal views of church government, and to let it be known that it is unjust and cruel in the members of the church, to consider them in the light of would-be masters. They will thus not only rescue themselves from the odium of the members, but the jealousy of the travelling preachers likewise, who are, in many instances, under the most fearful apprehension of putting power into their hands. They ought to say to these monopolisers of power, brethren we do not want your power, we will not have it; it belongs to the church in common with us, and God forbid that we should covet what is another man's due.

Local preachers have been a kind of scape goats: the travelling preachers and the people have, in some sense, visited their mutual faults upon their heads. If the head goes wrong the tail can never go right. One of the deplorable effects of power is, that those who feel oppressed by it, without resisting it, have a strong propensity, generated by it, to oppress others. One of this humble order used to call himself, "*Jack at a pinch*." But Mr. Asbury had no such contemptible opinion of them; he would earnestly and emphatically say in the annual conferences, that they were the *body guards* of our cause. One thing is certain, that where travelling preachers are not numerous enough to be in effect local, our members have but mighty little preaching, unless they have local preachers to give them Sabbath preaching, and the great body of the people hear no Methodist preaching at all.

A LOCAL PREACHER.

Letters to a Minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church No. II.

DEAR BROTHER—I have intimated that those founders and leaders of sects, who resort to undivided and unqualified power, display no extraordinary wisdom or foresight; and of course, do not entitle themselves, in this respect, to the admiration, or the imitation of their successors. Among those tribes of men which approach nearest to a state of nature, while the natural love of liberty is but little controlled by education and circumstances, power is not artificially divided; but, in order to obviate its effects, it is made temporary; and when the common danger is past, becomes in a great degree nominal. But in the earlier stages of civilization, when the weaker tribes are subjugated by the stronger, power is rendered perpetual, and as arbitrary in peace as in war. That some great men, and a few good ones, have held the reigns of absolute sovereignty, is undeniable; but, that their wisdom and virtue died with them is equally so; for, their ignorant and vicious successors, found no principles to hold them in check. If the worst man in the world could be hypocritical enough to secure to himself the episcopal office over us, he would find the way plain, and the paths made straight, for the operations of despotism. The dead lions, the WESLEYS and ASBURYs, would be no impediment in the way of those living dogs. Their journals, to be sure, would tell pretty stories of their labours and sufferings, and humility, and self denial, and how they conscientiously used power, as they thought, without abusing it; but, what would a tyrant, in principle and inclination, care about journals. Even the dumb heads, who have been religiously bound, never to whisper any thing like "Hitherto shalt thou come and no further," would perhaps begin to stare with amazement to find that from the Atlantic to the Rocky Mountains, there is not one single fence or barrier to a wicked bishop's power to do mischief.

No one can doubt, but that, if the state governments in this union had been destroyed, and all power lodged in the hands of one undivided sovereignty, power might be made to act more efficaciously in given cases; but will any body say, that such an indivisibility, would have most effectually secured our civil liberties? The wisdom of our statesmen has been displayed in fabricating a general government, to

bind and unite all the individual states and citizens, without infringing upon the liberties of either. I can conceive of no higher effort of political wisdom than this; it approaches nearer to the godlike, than any other with which I am acquainted. What kind of legacy Mr. Wesley would have left to the American Methodists, had the travelling preachers continued, to the day of his death, to have obsequiously followed his will, it is not in our power to say, we only know that he could not possibly have left them more completely in the power of the General Conference and the bishops than they are at present. You must pardon me, my brother, if I do not father our perpetual ministerial supremacy upon Mr. WESLEY. Though I have not the most exalted idea of his foresight, as a universal legislator, (with his English plans I have nothing to do,) yet, I am inclined to think, that if there had been wisdom and inclination enough in the men in power in this country, to have opened and maintained an official correspondence with him, upon the nature of our political institutions, and our civil and religious predilections, the venerable man would have yielded, at least a silent consent, to a church legislation among us. I never reflect upon the chapter in our history, which relates to the formation of our church, without feeling it in my heart, for the sake of those concerned, to wish that it were blotted out. It is a most mortifying monument of the want of diplomatical ingenuity. An old preacher used to make himself merry with the case of the messenger, who was, "sent like an arrow through the south," to call the preachers to conference in Baltimore. The occasion had certainly nothing in it to require bustle or haste. No time was left to *think*. If it had been a time of war, matters could scarcely have been hurried on faster to repel an invasion. And yet all this would have been tolerable, if it had been only a beginning, and a suitable preparation had been made for the reception of after thoughts; but, it seems, that nearly forty years of experience have shed no additional rays of wisdom over our legislative councils. No idea which relates to the dividing and balancing of power, can find any admission into our General Conference. The motto upon the door of this temple still is, "or Cæsar or nothing." Would to God that it might be changed for "*My brethren, be not many masters*." But, really, my friend, if I could be influenced by your implied advice, to call any man master, I should make my selection under the imposing aspect of that profound

wisdom which pervades systems, and penetrates into futurity. Why should we have a master to teach us to cut the Gordian knot? We do not want a **WESLEY** or an **ASBURY**, to tell us that travelling preachers can do no wrong, but wisdom to teach us how to prevent them from doing wrong; or, to correct their errors. I venerate the memory of those men, and all good men, for the good they have done by their public labors, as well as for their personal worth; but it would be unjust to praise them for what they left undone, and unjust to ourselves not to try to remedy what they did wrong. It is no pleasant task to me, to point out the defects in the church polity of our fathers, or to rouse and animate our contemporaries to supply their lack of service; and the labour is rendered doubly disagreeable from the liability to which it exposes me of losing the affections of my friends through a misapprehension of my motives. Already, I perceive that some of them begin to look strange. "**ARISTOTLE LOVES PLATO, BUT HE LOVES TRUTH BETTER THAN PLATO.**"

If it is certainly possible, in any case in this world, it is certainly right, to contend upon principle for church representation, and of course legislation. On the subject of executive power, a difference of opinion may perhaps be harmlessly indulged; for, while the legislative power is participated in by the church, and the right of trial to the members by their peers remains, these points can be corrected by time and experience.

Yours, &c.

P. P.

No. 24.

Western Repository, vol. ii. January, 1822, No. ix. page 356.

*An Appendix to "A Review, &c. upon the presiding elder question."** (See page 257 of this Vol.)

Contrary to our usual custom, in our review, we gave praise to living characters; but we beg the reader to consider, that the review was written in anticipation of a time when the transactions alluded to may be employed as pre-

* This paper was intended, by the author, to have been published in No. VIII, but was not received by the editor in time for insertion in that number.

cedents, and the active agents shall have finished their mortal course. A speaker then, might employ in substance the contents of the review; but with how little effect, when opposed by precedents which shall have become venerable through age, is easily to be foreseen. If any thing could have an effect in such a crisis, it must be an appeal to some coeval production. In General Conference some one might then say—"The opinions and acts of two distinguished members of the General Conference of 1820, have been produced as precedents, &c.; but I hold in my hand, Mr. president, an essay of a contemporary writer who predicted this very consequence, and I refer to him with peculiar satisfaction, as it is evident that he was actuated by no prejudice against those venerable men. It is to be regretted, sir, that we have not been in the habit of employing stenographers to take down the debates in our General Conference; for the want of them, we are deprived forever of those able speeches to which this writer alludes, and which, possibly, contained facts and arguments sufficient to put this question at rest; but, sir, without wasting time in idle regrets, by the aid of this review, I shall be able to rub off the rust of age from these precedents, and to convince you that they have gained their influence and authority from the mysterious obscurity which time has spread over them. A writer who had the candor to give the then bishop elect, and the senior bishop credit for the rectitude and purity of their intentions, had the courage also to point out what he conceived to be dangerous as precedents, in that part of their proceedings which related to a decision of the General Conference, commonly known by the name of "the conciliation." Of the soundness of his logic, and the correctness of his foresight, this debate has afforded the most abundant proof. It has come to pass, as the writer foresaw, that the General Conference is to have an episcopal *veto* held over it *in terrorem*. Be the question what it may, the bishops, like the tribunes of the people in the Roman senate, will only have to say, "*I forbid it*," and there the matter must end. Doubtless they will forbid us to meddle with all matters touching their own prerogatives. Would it not be well for them, like the Roman tribunes, to be chosen by the people, and be obliged to act unanimously, before they can exercise their veto, &c. &c." We felt the delicacy of the case very sensibly, when we were about to designate two men by title; but, as we were writing with an eye to

futurity, we conceived, that if our fears were not realized, no evil consequences could follow to their memories. On the contrary, should our apprehensions ever be verified, we might render to them, as well as the cause, an essential service; for we might thus correct an evil by anticipation. We were not present when the protest, (if we may call it so,) against the conciliation was entered. Having witnessed that interesting scene, (the vote of a large majority in favor of the conciliation plan,) we left the Conference with joyful emotions of heart. We were afterwards told, that the bishop elect expressed, in a note to the bishops, his conscientious scruples about carrying the rule into effect, as he considered it to be an infringement of the third restriction; and, that the senior bishop did the same, but in a manner more full and circumstantial, before the Conference. Whereupon, the friends of the conciliation delivered some very able speeches; and that one of the speakers in particular, was quite eloquent in his regrets and complaints respecting the course which had been pursued; he conceived, that the Episcopal objections ought to have been made before the question was decided, &c. This we endeavored to account for in the review, by supposing that the result was not expected, &c.

The review was intended to embrace all we meant to say on the presiding elder question; and we hope, that this additional explanation will be sufficient to enable our readers to identify the point on which we think the Discipline is silent. We never meant to involve any other parts of the public administration of these brethren, either by design or accident, no matter which. The discipline, as we think, and indeed are fully persuaded, gives no power to the bishops over the acts of the General Conference. We have always considered that body as head over the bishops.

QUORUM PARS FUI.

No. 25.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. II. January 1823, No. 1x. page 356.

The Arch Bishop.—An Essay humbly inscribed to Travelling Preachers.

It is no less instructive than amusing, to observe the experiments of chymists upon the different *Gases*, particu-

larly those which are lighter and heavier than common atmosphere. A vial filled with a lighter gas, will retain its contents bottom upwards, though the mouth be unstopped; and one with the mouth open will retain a heavier gas though standing on its bottom. Would it not be very desirable for ecclesiastical legislators to have some test by which to ascertain what kind of gas or spirit belongs to each particular system of church government, that they might regulate the container accordingly? It is manifest, that if, in any case, the ruling spirit should be lighter than the common spirit, it will escape, unless the vessel is turned bottom upwards, or stopped tight.

We think that we have ascertained, that the spirit of a hierarchy is the lightest of all the gases: and, of course, has the strongest tendency to ascend; and that if as much of it could be collected as would fill a balloon, like a balloon it could only be kept down by the strongest cords. It was upon this hypothesis that we confidently anticipated, that as soon as we should have more bishops than one, a strong tendency to an archbishoprick would manifest itself; and, that if our ecclesiastical chymists were ignorant of, or inattentive to this circumstance, and neglected to stop the container, the hierarchy would soon ascend above their reach and control. We have speculated pretty freely upon these matters. The most obvious means to introduce the office of archbishop, it seems to us, is by assumption. If a bishop should chance to have age and experience enough to give countenance to the attempt, he might establish a precedent. The transition from the fact to the law, would not be great. Opposition itself might facilitate the event; for, if one or more bishops should happen to have courage enough to assert and maintain independence, the next General Conference might be induced to give one the precedence, in order to prevent future jarring. Or it may be done thus, two or more might agree who should have the first honor, and to take it in succession, and thus pay themselves upon the application of the maxim, before honor is humility. An hundred stratagems could be devised to hoodwink the General Conference. If travelling preachers, in their legislative capacity, proceed upon the plan of exerting their powers to raise feathers and to sink lead, they cannot fail to drive all matters to extremities. But who can foresee into what errors and absurdities party spirit may not betray men? For our part, we are fully persuaded that the germs

of the most boundless ambition are inherent in our system; and that without an active, resolute, and intelligent spirit on the part of our legislators, power will soon mount high over their heads.

We hope that our prediction will not secure its own accomplishment; but really, our presentiment is that before the middle of the present century, a motion will be introduced into the General Conference, in effect, to make an archbishop, and that party spirit will run high enough to cause it to pass to a second reading. But then, and in that case, what shall we do with our constitution? Why, no difficulty can grow out of that, as there is nothing in it to prevent the spirit from ascending; the vial is unstopped. He might, indeed, be humbly and respectfully invited to attend annual conferences, as his business or health might permit; but, as necessity is the mother of discovery, as well as of invention, the details might be left to experience. In the mean time, while the subaltern bishops could have their work so distributed to them, as to leave the superintendency *itinerant* and *general* enough, to satisfy the letter of the Discipline, &c.

ANTICIPATOR.

No. 26.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. II. January 1823, No. 12. page 358.

Thoughts on the Freedom of the Press and of Speech.

"Woe unto you when all men speak well of you." It was not until lately that we entered into the spirit of this maxim. The circumstance which first led to the present turn of thought was this. A preacher once stood pre-eminent among us, and secured to himself the applause of every body, particularly for the meekness and sweetness of his temper. In process of time it came to pass that a train of cross questioning between him and his brethren, disclosed an unusual degree of unkindly feeling on his part. He seemed, as Mr. Rhodda used to say, "to lose all his sweetness." Could it have been possible, said I to myself, that so much gentleness and amiableness were affected? Was this man a hypocrite, or has flattery spoiled him? This latter supposition may be true; He of whom all men speak well, must needs be flattered, and this idea may be embraced in our Lord's saying, "woe unto you," &c.; as

though he had said ye cannot bear flattery ; it will pervert your understandings and spoil your tempers. It will make you selfish, positive, impatient of contradiction, peevish, and ill-natured. But if this conception is embraced in the maxim, it has a bearing upon the freedom of the pen, the press, and of speech, and has been offended against by those clergymen who have procured the enactment of laws to coerce their enemies into silence. The inquisition, it cannot be doubted, was productive of unbounded flattery to the clergy in the countries where it was established. By destroying the liberty of the press and of speech, one of the fountains of blessing is dried up, and those who instigate the measure, entail upon themselves the woe denounced against the false prophets.

The whole passage may be considered as a proof that our Lord needed not to be told what was in man, because he knew the hearts of all men. He foresaw that his disciples would be exposed to the opposite extremes of adulation and hatred ; and that the natural and inherent love of praise would prompt them not only to seek applause, but when it might be in their power, to extort it, without being subjected to the necessity of deserving it. Power will be flattered, and wealth will be flattered, and parts and talents will have more than silent admirers. But flattery is like ardent spirits, it stimulates and intoxicates the brain. When its inebriating fumes have been frequently applied, the mind hankers for it, as the drunkard does for his bottle, and becomes impatient and even furious under the privation. Here and there a head may be found strong enough to bear a little flattery, but no one can bear it constantly : *woe unto you when all men speak well of you.* The Pope, or the Romish clergy, or as he or they, or both are wont to call themselves, "the church;" falsified their claim to infallibility when they procured laws to be made to terrify their enemies into silence, and to encourage and reward their flatterers. Is it not a matter of wonder, that writers of high pretensions to philosophy, should emblazon the crimes of priests, as though there were something in the office which alters the nature of man. For ourselves, we always have believed that they were men of like passions, and that they are affected and influenced by physical and moral laws in the same manner as other men. What cause then, has contributed in a peculiar manner to spoil and corrupt priests? *Flattery.* They did not take the warning, and the woe was

fulfilled. Their heads grew giddy, and their hearts corrupt, amidst the surrounding smoke of that incense which they had helped to kindle. What every body said, they were not slow of heart to believe must be true; not reflecting that they were listening to the echo of their own voice.

Make no laws, procure none to be made against the tongue and the pen, leave your fellow men at liberty to say and publish what they will. The servant is not above his Lord. Consider, O ye clergy, what a contradiction of sinners he bore against himself. How is it that ye cannot understand this saying, blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake? Could you but see how much humbling and mortifying human nature requires, how much crossing and contradiction, to keep the mind sober, then would you know the meaning both of the woe and of the blessing.

One of the precautions which the founder of Methodism used to give to the preachers was, to beware, above all things, of that deadly poison, flattery. His remarks on this subject, are well worthy the attention of every Methodist preacher; but why strain out a gnat and swallow a camel? Elders beware; presiding elders beware; bishops beware of that policy which tends to surround you with flatterers. In effect, all men will speak well of you when your measures are so taken as to prevent you from hearing those who would speak otherwise, if they speak at all. This supremacy of ours, is a chip of the old block. Truth, they say, cannot penetrate to the ears of kings. All men will speak well of the General Conference, in the General Conference. All men will speak well of bishops, while they are stationing the preachers. How simple and obvious are the means to secure the hearing of only one side. Let there be no elections; they are rude, blunt, uncourtly things, but little given to flatter men in power; besides they lead to electioneering; and of all the means in the world to take off the woe of flattery, none can be compared to those.

The effects of flattery upon children are well known; but we never outgrow this infirmity; it grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength. It is flattery which is the bane of absolute monarchs. It is this deceitful demon which has betrayed with a kiss so many of our young and our old preachers. O ye professors of religion, be cautious how you flatter your preachers; and ye preachers, be cau-

tious how ye flatter your bishops; have compassion upon these men; consider that they are on the pinnacle of the temple, and that if their heads should chance to grow giddy with the sweet fumes of praise, they may lose their equipoise, and if they fall from such a height must be inevitably dashed to pieces.

DOKEMASIUS.

No. 27.

Westeyan Repository, vol. II. February, 1822, No. IX. page 266.

*Letters to a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church.
No. III.*

A crude and stale opinion, which existed among the preachers, something like "might is right," or we have a right to govern those we convert, as well as those we conquer, is now vamped up, and put forth under the imposing title of "*A Vindication of Methodist Episcopacy!*" Now, we know that the apostles were Jews, and that their political opinions must needs have been considerably modified by Grecian principles. Tarsus was a Grecian city, and the Greeks maintained their power in Palestine in a greater or less degree, from the time of Alexander until the conquest of the Romans. To say nothing of apostolic inspiration, can it be supposed that these Jews, one of whom was a thorough bred scholar, well versed in the writings of the Greeks who speculated more subtly upon the science of government than any other people, took the short cut of undivided power, and set themselves up in authority as absolutely as eastern despots? No; it is impossible to come to this conclusion by any logical inference. Not to insist upon the public odium which such an assumption would have brought upon them, it appears on the very face of their history, that it was with much difficulty that they could maintain an equality with their competitors. The Jewish converts made no ceremony in opposing PETER and PAUL: witness the case of the conversion of Cornelius, in which PETER was immediately taken to task for going in to men uncircumcised, &c., and almost all the epistles of PAUL, in which he is under the necessity of asserting and proving his apostleship, in opposition to those who denied it. The contests of the apostles, and particularly of ST. PAUL, which our itinerant brethren are so fond of enlisting in their be-

half, when their right to legislate for the church is questioned by any of its members, is altogether inapplicable to the case. His controversy was with rival teachers of rival doctrines. "For, though, (says he to the Corinthians, among whom his apostleship was most violently opposed,) ye have ten thousand instructors in CHRIST, yet have ye not many fathers: for in CHRIST JESUS have I begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me," and not of those rival instructors. I have heard ordination sermons preached by our episcopacy, from the eighth to the thirteenth verse inclusive, of this IV. chapter of I Corinthians, but it always seemed to me that the text was no wise calculated to prove the legislative supremacy of our travelling elders over our church. And I am very slow of heart to believe, that when this same apostle speaks of the care of all the churches which came upon him daily, he meant to express the feverish ambition of his soul to retain the power to legislate for them without their consent.

Yours, &c.

P. P.

LETTER IV.

DEAR BROTHER.—What you say respecting the influence of the REPOSITORY, may be true in part. That some, both in and out of the church, will be scandalized at the expose of our polity, there can be no doubt. But I beg of you to reflect well upon the demonstration which modern history has given of the value, as well as verity, of the scripture maxim, "Let the righteous smite me friendly." The Romish church would suffer none of its members to call in question its infallibility. What was the consequence? We have all witnessed it. The infidels took them in hand, and gave them a wound not skin deep, but to the heart. The thing is as fixed as fate, if this colossal power is not modified, it must fall to ruins. Now, in my judgment, is the most proper time to investigate principles. We are neither too young nor too crazy. Nobody I hope is yet driven to despair. Wavering confidence may yet be established by unconstrained measures. When the church and the world shall know that the great principle of the right of suffrage is recognized as the polar-star of our preachers, and that whenever the church think proper, they may exert it in their own behalf, our cause will be safe from internal fermentation and external injuries. The difficulties of church representation lies more in principle than in practice. I say to a

travelling preacher, out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee—If, as you say, a church delegation is really impracticable, then you have nothing to apprehend from an avowal of the principle. What would be safer in all events, than for the General Conference to make a provision that the number of church delegates should be returned to the annual conferences,—that they might fill up the vacancies in the usual way, or leave it optional with the church to choose its own members, or local, or travelling preachers. But you are afraid of elections. So am not I.

As for your concern, lest our venerable and laborious brethren should be relieved from any portion of their burden of office, I incline to think it has more of kindness than mercy in it. Mr. A, when a motion was once made in General Conference to relieve the bishops from the oversight of the temporalities, came forward and approved the motion, but the conference refused to unbrace it from his back; and so his successors go on, bowed down between the two burdens, the spirituals and the temporals; my blessing go with them, since they are afraid to receive it in the General Conference.

Yours, &c.

P. P.

Here the address to the senior bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, by Cincinnati, commences—(It is about the election of presiding elders.)

No. 28.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. ii. February, 1822, No. x. page 277.

The Cap Sheaf.

“PUT all your black coats and blue coats together, and see if that can beat that.” The quotations from the “VINDICATION,” in the Repository, No. VII. p. 262, shew the tendency of principles to generate identical ideas and language. The word *church*, it seems, among all suprematists, has at least two meanings. Among the *Romanists*, it is employed in the same convertible and equivocal manner, as it is in the quotations made by the Reviewer from B’s book. Such a play upon words we have had occasion to observe, is becoming *fashionable among us*. “THE RULES BY WHICH THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH GOVERNS ITS MEM-

BERS:" "THE EQUITABLE MANNER IN WHICH THE MEMBERS OF OUR CHURCH ARE DEALT WITH:" "WHAT MORE PRIVILEGES ANY PEOPLE CAN DESIRE:" are phrases which would not disgrace the pen of the SECRETARY OF THE ROMAN CHANCERY. Mr. B is a man of sense, and learning, and an author by profession; and, we trust, he is also both an honest writer and an honest minister. How is it then, that he could employ this *Popish slang*! The sin, we think, lies at the door of his "*high church*" principles.

The Methodist Episcopal Church is, or, *ought to be*, "a body of faithful men." The GOVERNORS of the METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH are A BODY OF ITINERANT PREACHERS, ELDERS and BISHOPS; who, by a misnomer, call THEMSELVES, "THE CHURCH"!!! This, we think *caps the climax*.

When American ears can be reconciled to such language, what will they be shocked at? There must be something strangely unnatural in ecclesiastical supremacy that leads men to affect the very names of the things which they most despise. *Kings* never call themselves the *people*; but the HEAD of the CHURCH styles HIMSELF, "SERVANT OF SERVANTS;" and our DIVINES call THEMSELVES "THE CHURCH!"

We have a word to add about "*privilege*." In the General Conference which established, or rather, *intended to establish* the mode of trial by jury, it became a question, whether a *jury* had a *right* to *judge of law*, as well as of *fact*? The opinion of Dr. Coke was, that they had the *right in both cases*; which he supported by a reference to the decision of the British court in certain (then) recent state trials. Now mark the consequence: If the court and the jury should chance to differ in opinion on a point of law, the COURT, that is, the PREACHER, can *appeal* to the quarterly meeting conference, who are certainly *not jurymen*, nor *peers*, but OFFICERS of the *preachers' own making*. "Any people can desire" that the "*privilege*" of trial by jury should be more practically accordant to the spirit of the original institution of juries. WE DO DESIRE TO SEE OUR RIGHT TO BE JUDGED BY OUR PEERS, PLACED QUITE ABOVE THE CAPRICE, OR THE CONTROL OF TRAVELLING PREACHERS.

CONSISTENCY.

The Church and the Apostles.

It has been recommended by certain writers, that in order to test the truth or beauty of a rhetorical figure, the orator should imagine to himself how it would appear if it were painted. This method might be advantageously employed in other cases. We cannot, indeed, conceive how a painter could manage the complex figure which some divines make of the ministry and the church; but in Revelations, xii. 1. we have a piece of painting in which the church appears to us to be clearly identified; and the apostles are fairly distinguished from her. "There appeared (says John) a great sign in the heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." It is generally, if not universally, admitted, that this was a representation of the church and the twelve apostles. Of her resplendent dress, and her position, we need not now say any thing; but we have to remark that, a crown makes no part of the head which wears it; and that inattention itself could hardly confound them. According to this figure, St. Peter was not the head of the church, as he only occupied a place by his representative star in the crown, in common with the other apostles. These, or similar remarks, we think, are applicable to all the figures in the New Testament, which appertain to the church and the apostles. They are not confounded, nor is the one put for the other. When the church is compared to a temple, it is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, JESUS CHRIST being the chief corner stone, &c. Now, the dragon, the fierce and inveterate enemy of the woman, has seven heads and ten horns, not crowns, all belonging to his body. But JESUS CHRIST alone is head over all things to the church. The twelve apostles, in virtue of their divine inspiration, hold a distinguished place; yet, they are neither the church, nor its head; how, then, came their boasted successors to be entitled to both these distinctions? We have long foreseen, and dreaded the consequences, of familiarizing the minds of our brethren to this unscriptural kind of language, and we are persuaded, that it is high time to make a stand against it. It seems to us, also, that "Episcopal Church," is susceptible of wrong

conception; indeed, according to the usual manner of explaining such adjectives, it nearly answers to "*Bishop's Church*." We trust, that it was not intended, that our church should belong to the bishops; but who can say that the time will not come, when some one in this high office will think so. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch, that is, followers of CHRIST; it had been well if they had never been called by a less significant title,

PHILO ALETHES.

Here the remarks on Bishop McKendree's address laid before the Philadelphia Conference, &c. by an OLD MEMBER of that conference commences.

Here a writer with the signature of WATERS begins to write.

No. 30.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. ii. February, 1832, No. x. page 392.

Remarks on Rev. Joshua Soule's Letter.

MR. STOCKTON: *

The contents of Mr. Soule's letter to you, will be found, I trust, to be partly answered in fact, if not in form, in the Appendix to the Review, published in No. 9. To which I beg leave to refer him and your readers.

In comparing Mr. Soule's letter with the review, there seems to be a disagreement, but as he and the reader are the more competent judges of the matter, I will quote the two passages. "It would afford the most sensible gratification, to be able to anticipate, that the historian will find himself in possession of ample data to present these transactions in the most favorable point of light; but with present facts and evidences, we have not the means of exonerating them from all departure from the rules of prudence; nor can we see how the consequence can be avoided unless they shall say we were mistaken." Review, page 261, No. 7, vol. 2. "And finally, after suggesting a fear that the future historian will not be able to obtain justifying data, he assures the public that he has such facts and evidences, as exclude the means of exoneration." Mr. Soule's letter, page 337, No. 9, vol. 2.

Mr. Soule seems so far to have mistaken my meaning, as to require of me what, according to the sense of the re-

view, I say I had not the means of doing, for the want of "facts and evidences." Whoever will be at the pains of examining the review and the appendix, will perceive, that I was aiming rather to apologise, than to criminate. And I do now say, had I been in possession of such facts and evidences as would have exonerated them, I would have done it. And if I possessed them now, I would exonerate Mr. Soule "from all departure from the rules of prudence." I have not even a copy of his note to the bishops, nor the means of procuring one. But if the publication of that document would exonerate Mr. Soule, it would afford me sensible gratification to see it spread on the pages of the repository. If Mr. Soule and the reader shall perceive the mistakes made in his letter, and rectify them, they will save me the trouble of a more particular answer to his communication.

QUORUM PARS FUI.

No. 31.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. II. February, 1822, No. 2. page 200.

On Ecclesiastical Polity.—No. I.

An itinerant ministry of such a country as England, consisting of the professed members of a national church, with a special view to the reviving of the spirit of religion in that church, and the organizing of spiritual proselytes into societies, for the purpose of stricter discipline, can be extended to only a few of the demands of an independent church in a country like these United States. Nor in this country, where all the different denominations are upon a footing of political equality, can such an itinerancy as Mr. Wesley organized in England, become extensively prosperous. Before the revolution it is well known, that the influence of Methodism was almost exclusively confined to those who professed to hold some relation to the established church. The manner in which the old Methodist preachers held forth in the pulpit, was adapted to that particular state of things, and would now be hardly tolerated. Scarcely any circumstances in old English Methodism, are relatively applicable to the Protestant Episcopal Church. If the experiment should be made to form societies out of the membership of the Protestant Episcopal Church, who might

still claim their standing in that church, it would not succeed to any considerable extent. These are plain and obvious facts which ought not to be overlooked.

Can it be possible, that the power which governs a church, acquires excellence by its mobility? The supposition is opposed by all the analogies in the universe, and is certainly not warranted by experience. It may be laid down as an incontrovertible position, that Methodism cannot exist in this country as in England, in a society form. It must maintain a church form, or be swallowed up of other independent churches. Now it admits of proof of fact, that there never was a church before our own, in which the power to govern was exclusively lodged in the hands of an itinerant ministry; and in ours, the principle is yielding to the pressure of necessity so far, that not only in all the principal towns, have the preachers become stationary for the time being, but in several instances, different congregations in the same place, are under the government of separate rulers. If the Methodist Episcopal Church can exist without schools and teachers of its own; without the means and influence to modify and direct the manners and morals which wealth naturally engenders; and, if the people will consent that the power which is perpetually to rule, shall remain quite above their control, then may its government remain exclusively in the itinerant ministry. But, will not the wealth, and learning, and liberty so generally diffused among the different denominations in this country, swallow up all competition not supported by these artificial aids? These are rival influences, which are in perpetual action, and if by revivals of religion, they may be temporally suspended, their whole effect is felt in the time of trial and adversity. Whenever these causes, in any instance take effect, nothing is more difficult than to countervail them. The ruling power, when exclusively in the itinerant ministry, must be little less than omnipotent, if it can overcome all the natural and artificial resistance against which it will have to contend. Have the advocates for the exclusive government of travelling preachers, ever counted the cost? Or, have they adopted the maxim, "Athanasius against the world?" Can power, naked, abstract, single handed, monopolized power, cope with all the sects, in a whole nation, who will make a common cause against it? Those who have lived to witness the results of the power of itinerancy upon the largest scale, must be sanguine indeed, if they

can confide in its final success. Have we not data sufficient to calculate its maximum effect? The advocates for the exclusive power of an itinerant ministry, speak and act as though there were something more than human in the plan; and, truly, if it be capable of unqualified success to an indefinite extent, it is an exception to every thing not altogether divine. In all the operations of nature, there are limits, beyond which, its power is either suspended or revoked; and the maximum limit is still more manifest in the works of art. It would therefore be reasonable, if we did not know the fact, to infer similar consequences in regard to the power of itinerants. The British connexion have done better under an annual president, than they did under a perpetual one; though that perpetual one, was the father of Methodism himself. The reason is obvious. Under their present economy, their president never grows old, is never sick and infirm. His youth may be renewed like the eagle's. Nothing demonstrates the advantage of the division of labor, and of course, power, more clearly, than the change which time makes in the human capacities. Young men for action, and old men for council, says the proverb; but an unqualified itinerancy, says all men, for action or for nothing. How injudicious is that policy which throws away every body it cannot move with a given velocity?

Elders in the apostolic times ruled well, though they did not, and possibly on account of their infirmities, could not, labor in the word and doctrine. So important was government in those days, and so rare the talent, that it was considered as a special gift, distinct from prophecy. Experience now proves that the gift of eloquent speech does not always qualify men to rule well. Let the orators travel, and let them preach as long as they are able and willing; but, let them not on this account be entitled to all power in heaven and in earth; nor when their tuneful tongues begin to falter, let them be thrown by as broken instruments: may they not even then assist in governing?

Is it not to be feared, that a servile admiration of the society polity of the British Methodist preachers, (whose hands are in the lion's mouth, and who of course must get them out as easy as they can,) has misled and bewildered the understandings of our General Conferences. In order to act up to the spirit of the British preachers, all their measures in this country must be reversed. They do all

they can in conformity to the government under which they live; but how differently must we act, if we go and do likewise?
P. P.

No. 32.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. ii. March, 1822, No. xi. page 419.

Thoughts on the General Conference.

If, as some of the travelling preachers are disposed to argue, the General Conference have nothing to do, we hope the members will stay at home; and not meet at Baltimore on a Tom fool's errand. We should think that the authors of this discovery will not have the thanks of the body of elders for thus (as a friend of our's used to say) leaving them the broom-stick to ride. It is impossible to be grave on this subject, and command one's feelings. We are obliged to laugh to keep from crying. We are going to offer a most sage piece of advice to the annual conferences. Rev. and dear brethren, we advise you before you elect your delegates for the General Conference of 1824, one and all of you, from Maine to Mississippi, to pass a resolve, that, two-thirds of your delegates concurring, the constitution may be so altered, that the General Conference may do something; and not sit together with their fingers in their mouths. If brethren go on to reduce their own theories into practice, they will become public laughing stocks. Their constitutions will become as ridiculous as the old "blue laws."

Let us now compare this do nothing attribute of the General Conference, with its doings in 1812; the very first session after the restrictions were imposed, a law was made, with pains and penalties against local preachers. It seems that there was a statute requiring local preachers to have their names enrolled upon class papers, &c. in default of which they were to forfeit their license, but certain ordained preachers argued that they had no license, and of course the law does not embrace them. The General Conference of 1812, took up this case upon motion made and seconded in due form, and passed the present act: the like of which, taking it for all in all, we think cannot be found in all the annals of preachers' legislation from the destruction of Jerusalem to this day.

A local preacher whose name is enrolled on the steward's book of the quarterly meeting of the circuit, or station to which he belongs, who has a parchment of deacon's and elder's orders as so many testimonials of the acknowledged belief of the bishops and elders of the church that he is called of God to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, forfeits them all if his name is not found upon a class paper; and to complete the whole, these penalties are imposed in 1812, by a body of men, who, according to the showing of some of their brethren who voted for this very measure, have no constitutional right nor power to do any thing. Is not this "going high low?" Time would fail to tell how many changes have taken place in our statute book; and how many have been attempted to be made since 1808. Certainly if the General Conference can do nothing, many a long journey and a vast deal of breath has been spent in disputing for nothing.

Now, it is easily to be perceived that all this affectation grows out of the childish or dotish fear that the delegates will over do matters.

This is all fudge. When the preachers become tired of travelling, and the people tired of change, the omnipotent constitution will become a dead letter; and all the men in the world will not be able to bring it to life again. Brethren had better be advised to try to nurse and coax the cause. We have a word or two to offer, when occasion serves, upon the subject of stationing preachers, and divers "other men's matters;" and, we flatter ourselves, that we can even on this thread bare subject say something in a way different from the manner of our good friends; but we dare not promise to say it either so logically or eloquently.

JUCUNDAS.

No. 33,

Wesleyan Repository, vol. ii. April, 1823, No. xii. page 441.

Warring in a Triangle.

An Ecclesiastico Ministerial paper of some importance to those who wish for information about our men and measures.

This Repository is a pugnacious kind of thing; like Daniel's ram, it pushes westward, and northward, and southward. Our readers are entitled to some positive informa-

tion respecting the state of parties among travelling preachers, and the relative bearings of the Repository towards them. A number of preachers, mostly to the north of the Potomac, are in favor of lodging the supremacy in the General Conference, nearly in a manner stated in a book called *A Vindication of Methodist Episcopacy*. It was against this book, as it gave a tangible form to the subject, that the Repository made a stand. The author of the vindication has unfortunately, and quite foreign to the merits of the controversy, become identified with his book; and, from untoward circumstances, is made to appear in the Repository, with an individual and personal hostility, which its writers have never felt towards him. The object of this book, it seems to us, is not merely to secure the General Conference against the supposed encroachments of the laity, but of the episcopacy also. Though this point, perhaps, from prudential considerations is not expressed, we infer it from the conduct of the writer and his friends.

The body of the preachers to the west and south of Maryland, with a part of the episcopacy, and some preachers elsewhere, claim for the senior bishop a precedence; which though they have not clearly defined, cannot be easily misunderstood in those cases in which his judgment happens to conflict with the conferences. When this interesting point was at issue, the author of the *Vindication*, as well as his friends, acquitted themselves well in behalf of the General Conference; and on all occasions, as far as we know, his zeal and uniformity on the presiding elder question, deserves the thanks of all, and has ours in particular.

The division among the advocates for a supremacy, and our opposition to the principle in any form, either in a General Conference of travelling elders, or an archbishop, we have expressed in our motto:—Warring in a triangle. How two enemies can fight against a third, has been considered as the most difficult of all military problems. The circumstance of the Repository, in the above respects, have indeed been unfavorable to its interests by reducing the number of its writers, as a third party, almost exclusively to the laity, and *lay*, that is, local preachers. Though we cannot persuade ourselves to believe, that all the travelling preachers are suprematists, that is, believe that the clergy have a right to make laws for the church without its consent; yet it can easily be perceived, that this singular and perplexing dilemma is well calculated to make them cau-

tious of avowing their opinions; and that those who oppose an archi-episcopal supremacy, will be more than usually careful to purify themselves of all cause of suspicion of communion with the advocates for laical rights.

The author of the *Vindication*, by the necessity of the case, being obliged to advocate an abstract principle for his rivals, as well as himself, bears a very disproportionate part of this burden. While he sustains the brunt of the battle, in the event of victory, it is still by no means certain that he will conquer for himself; others may reap the fruit of his labors, and leave him and his itinerant friends under a supremacy as disagreeable to them, as theirs is to us. This writer, we regret to say, has manifested a premature officiousness which we find it difficult to reconcile with his usual prudence and good sense. He seems not to have been aware of the extent of the force he was daring to the field, or of the perils to which the divided phalanx of itinerancy would expose him. Already have we heard more than once from his itinerant rivals, something like a hesitating tone, upon the subject of lay delegation, which indicated to our apprehension, that the spirit of rivalry between them was deep rooted if not incurable. We think, indeed, that as far as travelling preachers are concerned, the *Vindicator* and his friends have the better argument; at the same time, we are well aware, that in regard to the comparative tendency of the principles of ecclesiastical monarchy or aristocracy in the public mind, precedents are against their prospects of success. It is the common bias, and therefore, seems to be the natural one, for men in a competition between monarchy and aristocracy to favor the former. A General Conference of travelling elders, in which the members of the church have neither right nor power, may look big and talk big, but an archi-episcopal supremacy is much the more alluring object to the public gaze; and whether seen in the foreground or in the distance, will shine with a concentrated splendour calculated to obscure the diffusive radiance of an aristocracy. This we know to have been the fact in Rome.—When we want to study human nature on a public scale, we go to Rome; when religion to Jerusalem. Though the popes have always dreaded, and sometimes felt the power of general councils, they secured to themselves the greater measure of public favor. Moreover, if the supremacy is to go by seniority, the interests of the junior bishops, or their ambi-

tion, if bishops *could* be ambitious, would naturally lead them to take sides against the elders. We cannot, therefore, indulge in the belief, that the patrons of the supremacy of the General Conference, will always be able to number episcopal men in their ranks.

Some body, if our recollection serves us, whispered in in our ear, that such a union is not only unnatural, but savors of apostacy from episcopal dignity, not to say rights.

We do not anticipate that the litigating parties will compromise their claims, with a view to crush us. Neither of them can be presumed to owe us any hearty good will; for if we have said much against the supremacy of the body of the elders, the others must perceive that it was owing to the accidental circumstance of the book furnishing the text. It does not perhaps become us to say so; but, really, taking the facts and circumstances into due consideration, as they transpire, it does seem to us that the contents of the Repository are every day becoming more important both to the preachers and the private members. We have pursued our hazardous and unthankful task, from the high considerations of duty; had we been left to follow our own inclination, our subjects would have been different; and, we can now say without vanity or presumption, that the resources of the Repository are richer than ever, in original matter, unconnected with the odious subject of power. And we should hail the event as auspicious, if we could be left without the control of adventitious causes (as the present volume is written out) to begin another under the suggestions of our own genius, and a competent patronage. Gladly, very gladly would we exchange our polemic habits for the olive, the bays, and all the emblems of mental and moral peace; but, though we sigh for repose, neither our courage nor our ammunition are exhausted. We have a plentiful supply of arms, both offensive and defensive.

PHILO PISTICUS,	DOKEMASIVS,
PHILO NOMOS,	ADYNASIVS,
AMICUS,	CINCINNATUS,
SENEX,	THE EDITOR,
WATERS,	AND OTHERS.

No. 34.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. II. April, 1823, No. XII. page 445.

On Ecclesiastical Polity.—No. II.

The commentary on the book of discipline was pretty explicit; but it was reserved for the "Vindication, &c." to assert in so many words, the right of itinerant elders to govern themselves and all the members of the church, without their consent. Now, if we could prove that it is impossible for an itinerant ministry to govern every thing, and every body, we could set aside their right by inference, as nobody can have a right to do impossibilities. A travelling preacher can not rule his own house; he cannot have his own children in subjection; for this plainest of all reasons, he cannot rule where he is not. The same argument applies to a number of cases and circumstances in the church. He who is only once in four weeks in a place, possesses a ratio of knowledge, to a person who is constantly in the same place, as one day to four weeks. But his class-leader is delegated to take cognizance in his absence? Be it so. And is not this a giving up of the principle?

Experince, both in rules and in facts, must be united, to make an expert and correct administrator of discipline; but after all, the law lies only against the lawless and disobedient. The exclusion of such from the church, must be anticipated as a necessary case, and power sufficient for this purpose, must exist, as essential to the preservation of the church; but this formidable attribute is but small, when compared to the whole measure of ruling influence. The more perfectly a church is governed, the fewer will be the occasions for the exercise of the expelling power. To prevent, and to cure offences, constitutes a good church government; but these operations, it is evident, must be mainly effected by persuasion and example. In churches newly organised, and to which large accessions of members have been suddenly made, prompt discipline is generally called for; but in other cases, almost every thing must be effected by a delicate regard to personal reputation, and a skilful management of the principle of modest shame. The art of raising a blush, is the art of promoting virtue. It requires a nice and a delicate hand to touch the social springs of action, so as not to injure them. But when power is exclusively in the hands of itinerant men, little or none of the social influence can qualify its application. It

has a naked and terrifying aspect, and the influence of example disjoined from it, is weak and languid. Good manners and good morals, receive their first fostering influence in domestic life; and in the second stage of their existence they acquire strength and maturity from those conventional rules and examples by which each individual acts as a kind of censor general, and is acted on by the same influence from others. The task of training youth to virtue and piety on a general scale, by any other means, would be almost hopeless: but almost the whole of this operation is out of the reach of the itinerant preacher. He has neither time nor place to witness, or to participate in these scenes. Young men of sanguine temperament, when they begin their itinerant career, generally indulge themselves in the fond anticipation of seeing and knowing every body; but the experience of a few years, recovers them from this waking dream. The rapidity with which the faculties of the youthful mind are evolved, and the fixedness of character which the mind receives from actual impressions, soon renders the itinerant friends of the parents, strangers to their children. Travellers can bring few, if any, of those adventitious circumstances to bear upon the feelings during their absence, which so often and so largely minister to friendship among present acquaintances. Cicero relates a pleasant story of himself. He tells us, that on his return from the government of Sicily, he asked a Roman, whom he met on the way, what was the news in Rome, and what they thought of Cicero's administration, &c.? Cicero! answered the man, I never heard of his administration. He inferred, he says, that the Romans had good eyes, but bad ears. This remark is peculiarly applicable to young people; they are infinitely more affected with what they see than with what they hear. Moreover, the constant changing of rulers cannot fail to beget levity and inconstancy of friendship, between the rulers and the ruled. Let it constantly be borne in mind, that these essays are not intended to involve the subject of itinerant preaching in any manner or way, nor whether itinerant preachers shall have any participation in the government; but whether the government shall be exclusively in their hands.

In a former essay, the principle of maximum, or greatest degree of effect, was asserted of an itinerant government, as well as of the powers of nature and art. To which may be added some remarks upon the peculiar nature of religious

government. Certainly, a church should not be governed by a kind of martial law, and it is no difficult task to point out many cases in which the resemblance will not hold good between civil and ecclesiastical government. It is matter of some surprise, that among the zealous supporters of strict discipline, so little account should have been taken of the important question, what will become of the expelled member? Is it a sufficient answer to say, in all cases, and in all countries, "let him be to thee as a heathen man and a publican?" Happy "the powers that be," who have so exercised discipline, as to provoke the smallest measure of pride and prejudice. The cutting off of church members requires almost as much skill as the amputation of a physical member: as the body itself may be endangered by the operation. Age and soundness of mind are indispensable requisites in church rulers; qualities of rare attainment among itinerant men. In no labor, is the body or the mind so quickly worn out, as by constant travelling and preaching. Even the mind of the great Asbury was for whole years in a state of almost child-like debility; though he again recovered its strength. The number of young men who have had charges of circuits and stations among us, has long been proverbial. For though, as certain writers have shown, our travelling plan has much of military discipline in it, yet, from necessity, or some other cause, promotion to office is not graduated by any scale. A young man of five and twenty, or under, may have the government of a thousand souls, and a half or a whole dozen of local preachers; a moiety of whom have grown gray in the ministry; and he has the exclusive choice and control of all his seconds in command, or class-leaders. Do not all the arguments and remarks already made, go to show, that it is impossible for him to govern these people as they ought to be governed, and that therefore he cannot have the exclusive right?

On some future occasion, an essay or two may be devoted to the government of principle; in which it may be attempted to prove, that principle itself must be an ultimate cause in every correct system of ecclesiastical polity. Most unfortunately, in the present monopoly of the itinerant preachers, it is hardly brought into view; but every thing is committed to the virtue of unlimited power, and passive obedience.

P. P.

No. III.

Mr. Paley has made some judicious remarks upon the laws of honor, in which he shews how far they fall short of the divine law. But if the laws of honor have a binding influence and are actually observed, this is an instance of the power of principle to govern men socially; and, if the maxim "there is honor among thieves," be true, it is a still stronger example. For whether men associate as gentlemen or villains, their voluntary association is maintained by principle, and not by civil or moral laws. But what use do we mean to make of these examples? Do we infer from them that legislators and written laws and governments are useless if not mischievous? By no means. We consider such conclusions both false and dangerous. But, we argue them in evidence, that all laws and governments should be so organized and administered, as to generate and to foster the principles of obedience, and to promote their reciprocal influence among the members of the community. We have been told, that in some one or more of the eastern states, if not in others, there was an interregnum between the ceasing of the old British authority, and the commencement of the independent government; and, that nevertheless, such were the principles and habits of the people, that persons and property were as much respected as if the laws had remained in full force. This has been considered as a case without a parallel among nations whose spirits have been broken by despotism. Fear, indeed, is the weakest and most limited of all the motives to obedience. Under the influence of the fears of detection and punishment, every species of crime may be committed, save overt acts of rebellion. Is there not a danger of this very consequence in placing the governing power wholly in the hands of the travelling preachers? The members of the church finding themselves deprived of all participation in the government, and having no power to hold their rulers in check, may they not be naturally tempted to use artifice to remunerate themselves, and retaliate upon those who have deprived them of an inherent right? We know that fear and hypocrisy have thus followed in the wake of absolute power. When the old cat is gone, says the adage, the mice play. Could power in any other hands, be more favorable to the truant propensities of unprincipled professors of religion, than in those of itinerant preachers? The class leaders will hold them in check. May be so—may be not. But the preacher will be

round once in four weeks, and he'll thunder out his power upon them and threaten to turn out every soul of them. This to be sure, would be very alarming until next day, when he shall be off again. Well, next year the new preacher will be a thorough going disciplinarian and he'll set all to rights. Observe, we are speaking now of cunning against power, and we think that a little reflection must convince any one, that a change of preachers can neither correct it, nor match it. In this supposed case, it is a principle of reaction. The increase of the current only serves to increase the eddy.

If the time shall ever come, when motives and interests shall be strong enough to induce unprincipled persons to remain in the Methodist Episcopal Church, the present monopoly of power in the hands of the travelling preachers, will, as the same cause ever has done, drive things from bad to worse. We have listened with attention to the arguments employed to prove the lawfulness and the expediency of exclusive unbalanced power; but could hear nothing said of its effect upon the human heart, where it displays its greatest influence. We are indeed free to declare our disbelief in the omnipotent virtue of any system; as we know that ambition, as well as other evils, come from within, out of the heart of man; but we cannot help prognosticating danger when the system under which men act, has a natural tendency to inspire them with a desire for the distinction of office. One may be habituated to climb until it shall become painful to walk on level ground. Every office in our church is so organized as to have one above it on which it depends, up to the bishops, who are equal among themselves. It is a problem which time alone can solve, how they, after being schooled on the steep ladder of inequality, will agree to manage their co-ordinate jurisdiction. It will be happy for them, and happy for us all, if no strife creeps in among them, who shall be greatest!

When shall it be, that travelling preachers will submit to take lessons from the little child whom Jesus set in the midst of his disciples? Nothing is to us a source of greater regret, than to observe how large a portion of the leavening influence of a hierarchical spirit is found in the ministry, amidst the greatest causes of humility. That this spirit should infect men in all the pride of learning, who wait in the purlieus of kings' palaces, is no matter for wonder; but one would be led to suppose from the circumstances of

a travelling preacher's life and character, that the love of power would be his least and last besetment. Alas for us! stubborn facts constrain us to admit the mortifying truth, that power is an idol at whose shrine the unlearned, as well as the learned, the poor as well as the rich, the American republican, as well as the European monarchist, can bow down and pay their vows. P. P.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. iii. for 1823 and 1824.

Rev. Dr. John French's Address to the General Conference of 1820, in behalf of local preachers, and written by their request; appeared in the May No. of this volume.

No. 35.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. iii. May 1823, No. I. page 24.

Serious charges alleged against the Repository.

MR. STOCKTON,

I am a constant reader of the Wesleyan Repository. But the saying, "many men of many minds," I find is as applicable to the readers of this publication, and to those who do not read it, as to other men. Whether the writer of the following extract of a letter I received a few days ago, is a reader of the Repository, I know not; but, I can assure you that he is not only one of my oldest and most esteemed friends, but a man of long and of deservedly high standing in our church, whose judgment has great weight among those who know him best; and he is both extensively and intimately known and beloved. Here follows the extract:—"As to the Repository, I find it attacks the Wesleyan, and *Arminian* government* indiscriminately; and, I

* "*Arminian government!*" What sort of a government is that? Are its subjects represented? If so, we have never published a syllable against Arminian government. A system of church polity worthy of this distinguishing appellation, should have something, at least, resembling Arminianism. Now, if the religious creed which goes by this honored name, has any one doctrine more prominent than another, it is that which unites redeeming grace and free will. A system of ecclesiastical polity, according with the manly and rational system of Arminianism, is the very desideratum sought. As to "Wesleyan government," it is certain, there is no fair sample in America. Such a government, may, however, we would hope, be obtained, as shall associate its principles and practices, with the morality and soul-renewing christianity taught by Wesley.

EDITOR.

think, a government. I can compare it to nothing but a desolating army, that burns bridges, mills, villages, cities, farm-houses, &c. &c. and leaves all the country a desolation. By this, I mean to say, it destroys all governments that now exist, and leaves nothing as a substitute. If my conclusions are erroneous in this respect, I wait to be corrected."

Here, then, you have the sober and deliberative judgment of a wise and good man; not an office hunter, nor a flatterer of men in power; a man who would be found among the foremost to resist the progress of ambition. Now, though my friend has not made a convert of me to his way of thinking respecting the Repository, it seems to me that your correspondents and readers, and yourself also, should be apprized of it, in order that they and you may judge as favorably and as charitably as possible of those who oppose the Repository generally. I know that my friend was sincere in his opposition to the Repository, because he is sincere in every thing; but, I never should have conceived the ground of his opposition: nay, I never should have believed it, if I had not received the information from his own pen.

I have long known that our preachers and the members of our church, were not only men of like passions, but of like minds with the rest of our countrymen. I calculated, therefore, that the opinions which might be advanced in the Repository, though they might be abstractly correct, would give rise to a considerable degree of diversity of opinion and party feeling; but, that you and your correspondents, some of whom I know well, should be viewed as anarchists, and patrons of a work which attacks our government indiscriminately, and, as the writer thinks, all government, greatly exceeds my fears. You must now, sir, have the mortification to know that your first twenty-six, and succeeding twelve numbers, are compared to two squadrons of an army of Goths and Vandals; breaking through the peaceful barriers of law and government, and laying waste, with fire and sword, all the works of art and agriculture. The silence which has been preserved, notwithstanding your frequent calls for answers to the various essays, you must perceive, are not to be taken as a proof that they are unanswerable. Who would think of reasoning with a desolating army?

This is not the only instance which has come to my knowledge, of the unfavorable opinions which are entertained of the motives and intentions of the writers for the

Repository, as well as its editor; but, I had treated them heretofore as unworthy of serious regard, supposing that they were confined mostly to those whose prophecies (of evil) had gone before; and, who, of course, had an interest at stake in their accomplishment, (for though we are in no danger now-a-days of being hung as false prophets, yet we are tenacious of our notions as well as of our necks,) or to those who are much more easily stimulated by zeal for existing rules or usages, than by arguments and evidences upon their merits, however dispassionate.

I would advise you, sir, by all means, if you go on as you contemplate, with a third volume, to be very cautious lest you introduce any thing into your pages which might be construed into an occasion of personal quarrel, as it appears that you can publish nothing, about men or measures, which will not be subject to the most unfavorable construction. The cry of "mad dog" has been raised against your publication, and you may expect that it will be attacked, whenever it appears, with stones and sticks.

In vain shall you reiterate a thousand times over, that the only object is to obtain a representative and liberal government. You see that you are viewed as making an attack upon *Arminian* government, though I would fain hope that this was a slip of my friend's pen.

A CONSTANT READER.

No. 36.

Western Repository, vol. iii. May, 1823, No. I. page 30, 31.

Thoughts on Matthew xviii.

There was a time when a General Conference was so much above the bishops, that the conference could vote away their opinions, though they were written in the form of notes on the book of discipline. Such an event actually happened in the beginning of the present century. Now, as the note on the manner of trying and expelling members is still extant, and is a curious specimen of episcopal reasoning, &c., we will take the liberty to offer a few thoughts on the same subject. The note assumes as evident, that the 15th, 16th, 17th verses, were addressed to the apostles, and through them, to all ministers, &c. But the proof is not to us satisfactory. The apostles are not mentioned, as such,

in the whole chapter; which begins thus: "At the same time (that Peter was directed concerning the paying of the tribute money) the disciples came to Jesus, saying: Who is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?" Were these the other eleven only? Or were there some others with them? To us it appears that all that is spoken in the 20th verse, is spoken to disciples generally, without any reference to particular offices. For, the apostles themselves, in most instances, seem to be considered in many respects like other disciples, and were, in fact, in several points of knowledge, but little above them before they were endued with power from on high. Here are no intimations that there was any thing mysterious which was peculiarly given to them to know.

In the 21st verse, Peter comes and says, "How oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till seven times? Surely no one who understands our Lord's answer, will affirm that it was spoken through Peter to the ministry only! If then, when the speaker is a designated apostle, the answer is general, and concerns all disciples as well as apostles, how much more, when the speakers are disciples, must the answer be supposed to be directed to them generally? The authors of the note lay great stress upon the binding and loosing power, which, as they conceive, can belong to none but the apostles and their successors. They seem to have overlooked the consequence of this restriction upon the following verses: "For where two or three (does he mean only apostles?) are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Now we think that the disciples, while our Lord was with them, were "*the church*;" that is, that all the disciples of Jesus, during his ministry, were his church or congregation. We will now state the two cases: and FIRST, *that* we differ from; then, our own. "Moreover, if thy brother (apostle or minister) shall trespass against thee, go, &c.—but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be to thee," &c. &c. Does not this scheme imply, that if the apostles or ministers should be trespassed against, they must make the members of the church umpires and moderators? But did the authors of the notes, or any travelling preacher, ever do this? Those who have ever read of the manner of trying travelling preachers, deacons, elders, presiding elders, and bishops, will be at no loss to answer this question.

We will now give our own: "Moreover, if thy brother

(disciple) trespass against thee, go, &c. &c.—and if he neglect to hear the church," &c. &c. The General Conference, as we have said, decided, by a large majority, upon this point, upon the principle that the members of the church ought, of right, to be judged by their peers; and, in 1808, this act was made unrepealable by the delegates of the annual conferences. One of the proofs of the correctness of this decision, we draw from 1 Corinthians, chap. vi. in which we have a clear and full view of St. Paul's conceptions of the judicial attributes of the saints. "Dare any of you, (says he) having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things pertaining to this life?" We deem it highly worthy of remark, that, while our Lord officiated as a teacher among his disciples, he did not direct them to appeal to him in cases of trespass by their brethren; and, also, how exactly St. Paul enters into his master's spirit in this respect; he neither constitutes himself nor any of his brother apostles judicial officers; but, considers that the powers of the church are plenary. Let any man, not biassed by an invincible attachment to ministerial prerogative, read the first verses of this chapter, and then say, if the binding and loosing power, or the judicial authority, is not given by our Lord to the church, in Matthew xviii. 18.

DOKEMASIUS.

Thoughts upon the origin and power of offices in the Church.

"I've found out a gift for my love!"

In the notes on the discipline, we are told that what Mr. Wesley said of experience and expediency in Europe, is applicable to presiding eldership; that it came into being by degrees. If we understand their intentions correctly, the first presiding elders were elders; or, in other words, that all the first elders who were ordained, were, in effect presiding elders; only, that there were no elders for them to preside over. Mr. Wesley, it seems, recommended that no more elders should be ordained than were strictly necessary (to preside), but that afterwards the bishop, in the little conferences of those days, ordained more, and Mr. Wesley as-

sented. In 1792, the office of elders, to preside over elders, was fixed by statute, nearly on its present footing. Is not positive proof still wanting, whether Mr. Wesley really approved of the present plan? So we suspect. But what particularly struck our attention in this note, was, the power which it assumes for the annual conferences over this order of men—they may try them; expel them; or suspend; or reprove them for mal-administration, &c. &c. The notes on the bishop's power are no less remarkable for the full powers which they claim for the General Conference to take them to task. Nay, the authors pray that if ever they abuse their power, the General Conference may almost annihilate it; or something like it. Was it foreseen in those note-writing times, that before the generation should pass away, the text would be altered? We wonder how those gratuitous prayers would tally with certain episcopal measures, which report says, came to pass A. D. 1820? Never was there a maxim or a usage more favorable to the advancement of power, than "by degrees, or by little and little."

DOXEMASIVS.

No. 37.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. III. June, 1823, No. II. page 69.

A Review of the first and second volumes of the Wesleyan Repository.

To reform and not divide, is much more difficult in church than in state. But the term reform, is too general and indefinite in its common acceptation, to express or embrace all the changes which may be attempted in religious matters. The discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in its present form, is not an innovation, or a corruption, of some more ancient and correct system of discipline, either in the society, or in the church. But one change in principle seems to have taken place from the beginning, and that is favorable to liberty, viz: the transferring the trial of a member from the preacher to a committee of private members. The plan, to be sure, *halts by the way*, but still it is founded on a change of principle. It is giving a member a chance to be judged by his peers; and but for the influence of one man, there would have been no drawback. As the case now stands, the prerogative of the preacher to appeal the

case, or carry it to the quarterly meeting conference, seems not to be liable to much abuse, and will seldom be resorted to, perhaps, save in doubtful instances.

The idea then of bringing the discipline back again to its primitive principles, is out of the question in our case; nor is there any complaint that the execution of the discipline is not sufficiently strict, or less so than formerly.

The principle contended for by the Repository, is a principle of right, which has never been yielded to the Methodist Episcopal Church by the travelling preachers—the *right* the members have to be represented, or to represent themselves in the legislative department of the church, and thus have a voice in the making of the rules by which they are to be governed.

The *right of suffrage*, is the original and fundamental principle which has been extended through two volumes of the Repository. How then can it be said that this publication is full of lies and misrepresentations? That it is opposed to government and leads to anarchy and division, &c.? Is it a lie, a falsehood, a misrepresentation, to say that the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church have not now, and never had a voice in the General Conference? Is it a lie, a misrepresentation, to say that it is their *right*—that they ought to be represented in the legislative councils, which make laws or rules for the government of the church? If not, then the Repository is not full of lies and misrepresentations; and, it does not favor anarchy and division. Some among the most fierce and inveterate opposers of the Repository, do not hesitate to declare that *they never read it*; and, in one instance, we are told, a local preacher, who brought forward a resolution in a district conference, the purport of which was to condemn the work, was compelled to acknowledge that he had never read it; and it came out pretty plainly that he was put up to the thing for party purposes, by a man who had the assurance to say, that the less people knew of church matters the better for them.

Now, it could hardly be expected that 8 or 900 octavo pages could be written, in repeating over and over one or two simple and identical sentences. The main subject has, indeed, been ramified and extended in its details, causes and consequences; facts and circumstances have been brought into consideration; and men and measures have been made to pass in review. Will it be asserted, and can it be proved, that all these have been misrepresented? In

writing essays, for a periodical work, about the transactions of half a century or more, and the opinions and actions of men scattered over this great republic, mistakes it was foreseen were unavoidable; and, therefore, the pages of the Repository have been kept open for their correction; but, its opponents have assumed that its writers and its editor were liars and deceivers, who set out with a view to propagate falsehoods and misrepresentations; and, of course, but few of them would condescend to disgrace or defile their pens by a contact with its pages. Now, is not this assumption, and all this kind of proceeding, nearly allied to persecution? Certainly the Repository is not infallible, and it never affected to be so; but the writers professed to be *honest men*. Here we may mention a case. The editor published some account of the book concern, in which he stated what he had heard, namely, that the editors received the retail profits of the books sold at retail by themselves, and wrote to a correspondent to ascertain whether this had been the uniform usage. This correspondent replied, and he so published. It came out that one of the former agents did not receive those profits, and it afterwards appeared in evidence that the acting agent did not receive them. Now it happened that three successive agents were all together in an annual conference, and the agent in whose favor the correction was made, declared publicly, that the editor had libelled him! If the taking of these profits was wrong in itself, was not the declaration a libel upon his predecessors, who did take them? But neither the writer nor editor did say that it was wrong; they only stated the case as facts in which this ex-agent is not implicated.

Hitherto a few solitary writers, unknown to each other, under concealed names, have furnished all the original essays upon the great principles of church rights and privileges; in which all have an infinite interest, and yet the editor was left with his scanty subscription list to struggle against prejudice and all opposition, on his own responsibility. At one time he was brought so low as to be compelled to advertise that the work must stop; but by the timely aid of a few generous patrons, and the efforts of one man, he was not only enabled to proceed, but to obtain original matter more than sufficient for each succeeding number. In the annals of printing in this country, there is not perhaps an instance of a periodical work, which from so small beginnings and under so many discouragements, has risen by its own merits

to so great a degree of independence on borrowed matter. The first volume of the Wesleyan Repository, thanks to the enthusiasm of the editor, and the prompt and persevering efforts of a few writers, taught, and must long continue to teach, Methodist preachers and people in these United States, not to despise the day of small things, nor to despair of their own resources when the sacred cause of religious liberty is concerned. Several of the principal writers for the Repository, have determined to stand by the editor and supply him with matter for a third volume.

To the want of such an arrangement may be traced almost all the trifling errors and imperfections of the two first volumes, and the temporary advantages they have given to the opposers of the work. Let the candid reader consider that the Repository has been struggling for life—that its editor has had “fightings without and fears within.” Let him bear in mind also that his correspondents were men in business, living remotely from each other; men who could only redeem a few hours from sleep, or labor, to write an essay which they could scarcely find time to transcribe into a legible hand. Love for a good cause, for the *best of causes*, and sympathy for the editor, and these alone, could have overcome the inconveniencies under which many a line in the Repository has been written. But these John Baptists in the cause of religious liberty, have lived to see those come after them, who were by official station preferred before them. They have wrestled till the break of day, and they hail its beams and exult in them. The three last numbers of vol. 2d, need only to be placed in comparison with the three first of vol. 1st, to prove that we have not run in vain nor labored in vain. The day, we trust, is not distant when the Repository will find patrons and writers enough among travelling preachers to give it an increased celebrity, and add new lustre to the principles it maintains.

No. 38.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. iii. June, 1822, No. ii. page 75.

Letters from a Local Preacher to a Travelling Preacher.

Letter i, p. 75. Letter ii, p. 92. Letter iii, p. 166.

DEAR BROTHER,

I hope you will consider the inscription, and the subscription of these letters, as incidental. The almost im-

mense disparity between our two conditions, may, without any ill effect to yourself, be forgotten for the few moments which this correspondence will engross. Do not consider it as arrogant or obtrusive in me to write, nor degrading in you to read. The subject itself is of magnitude sufficient to merit your attention.

I assume it as a fact, that Francis Asbury was the father of the present system, which goes under the name of the form of discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church: without his agency and influence, it never would have been what it now is. Mr. Wesley and Dr. Coke might have written, but their theories would have remained, in a great measure, a dead letter. The vast ability with which this great man presided over these elements, was fully equalled by his sincerity. He had the utmost confidence in the plan, as the best that could be devised, to promote the work of God in this country. I am willing to acknowledge, that your own sincerity is equal to his; and yet I do not despair of being able to convince you, that you were both mistaken. The plan was started wrong. The radical error was, in converting the Methodist society into a church. Our doctrine of "the new birth" is as true of churches, as of individuals. Old things must be done away, and all things become new, in one case as well as the other. As in state, so in church, we should have first declared *independence*. The next step should have been to fix a formula, (if I may speak after the manner of mathematicians,) to calculate consequences and demonstrate results. There are data by which the consequences of church measures may be determined with a considerable degree of exactness. We lay it down as a good general rule in religion, that nothing should be admitted as an integral part of a system of church polity, without endeavoring to ascertain, with the greatest possible measure of precision its final consequences. The history of the church should be studied, not so much as the history of religion, as of human nature. The church of Rome errs, because she is infallible. Do you not perceive the truth of this paradox? She can make no experiments; she can correct nothing, until the mischief is done. Observe with what facility she has admitted innovations, and with what rapidity they spread, in the examples of the monks and friars. Writers tell us, that monkery led to the reformation, and that the Jesuits contributed to lay the foundation for the French revolution. Why did not the

Romish court foresee these consequences? The veil of its own infallibility hid them from its eyes. Do not be alarmed; I do not mean to charge travelling preachers with an affectation of infallibility; but, I am going to say to you, what I trust you will not deny, viz: that if men of different principles do the same things, the consequences will be more like their actions than their opinions. When the power of the Methodist Episcopal Church was lodged exclusively in the hands of travelling preachers by themselves, their minds approached towards the state of those who believe themselves to be infallible. They did not, they could not look forward to consequences. The unity and peace of the church was committed with the most unsuspecting confidence, to this unheard of and untried experiment. I boldly say, *unheard of*, and *untried*. Was it foreseen that in process of time, there would arise in the Methodist church, a body of local preachers, numerically greater than the actual number of travelling ones? If so, was it anticipated that they should be deprived of all the honors and emoluments of office, and be wholly excluded from the legislative and executive departments? Be it so. And was it likewise foreseen that by this privation of all their rights and privileges, they would be, *ipso facto*, ministerially degraded? Did travelling preachers, with their eyes open to all these things, not only believe it to be right to deprive local preachers of all secondary and artificial means of usefulness, in order to transfer them to themselves; but were they fearless of all the consequences which might possibly be produced by these measures? I am free to say, that from the first day to the present, the minds of travelling preachers have been so fettered and bewildered with the preconceived hypothesis of their own exclusive power as to disqualify them from taking just and liberal views of these subjects, in all their bearings, and tracing them to their results. The power of an itinerant ministry has been the idol of the system. It is the end, not the means. The time must come, when the fears and jealousies which are entertained of competition will re-act. Those who are treated as rivals will eventually become so.

A LOCAL PREACHER.

Letter II.

DEAR BROTHER,

At one breath, our system-makers tell us, that no plan or model of church government is laid down in the scriptures, and with the next they confound us with declamation in favor of the scriptural nature of their own plan. Now, an agreement or likeness between two systems may be in language or in principles. "In the language," say the English divines, "of our excellent church;" but this language may be found, on comparison, not to be in exact accordance with that of the New Testament. It is, to be sure, of no great consequence in the abstract, how the language differs, provided the principles are nearly the same; but, certainly, this kind of egotism ought to have little weight in any point of competition with the "excellent" New Testament. We have copied the church of England, because we were taught to believe it approached nearer to the primitive churches than any other. But what has the church of England in common with the primitive churches? Or what have we in common with the church of England?

If it were possible for a painter to draw the three portraits, and place them side by side, against a wall, in view of all who might choose to inspect them, would it not be difficult to find the points of resemblance? Take, for instance, the office of bishop, which is supposed to be common to them all, without the name, and who could find the identity? The bishops of the church of Ephesus—a bishop of a diocese—and our universal itinerating bishops, have not, surely, all been made by the same inspired text! Neither of the two latter can be considered as fair and exact copies of the former; nor is the third like the second. We must say that if they were intended as *fac similes*, the artists were bad takers of likenesses, or that those who think they are good ones, are bad judges in such matters.

However, I am disposed to admit, that in the primitive times there were by-laws and prudential rules for the better ordering and governing of ministerial and church matters, and that they cannot be well dispensed with for a length of time, in any large community. Where, then, lies the danger of error? In making such by-laws and rules like the laws of the Medes and Persians, which alter not. Whatever rule we may introduce into discipline without the authority of the New Testament, may be also repealed

without its authority. The perfection and glory of the New Testament, in my judgment, consists in this, that it imposes no such laws by prescription. To use our own language, Paul was a travelling preacher; James and John were local preachers. The idea is implied in the term "pillars." Now it seems that they had a "Conference," and the brethren gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship. The evidence of grace being plain, it was mutually agreed, that Peter and his associates should continue to preach to the Jews, and Paul and Barnabas to the Gentiles. But, it appears, that in those days there was greater liberty of conscience in Antioch than any where else, and that, of course, it became a kind of asylum to the Jewish and Gentile converts. Peter and Paul happening to meet there, and Peter fearing lest the success of his ministry might be injured by the prejudices of certain Jewish converts, who had formerly belonged to James's congregation at Jerusalem, refused to eat with the Gentiles. Paul, as the ministry of the Gentiles was committed to him, magnified his office, by vindicating the principles of christian liberty in the very presence of Peter, and telling him plainly, that in giving countenance to these prejudices of education he would do much harm. When shall we have such a conference as this? When will our preachers, travelling and local, display such fearless honesty and candor of soul? Liberty—liberty and equality of rights, you see, is the soul and spirit of this business. These narrow prejudices of a Jewish education, if they had not been thus timely checked, would have degraded the Gentiles and their preachers. The tendency of our General Conference proceedings, has been, to make us an order of bigoted hierarchists, though it is plain that we have no foundation for such a superstructure; and that if we had, our final success would deprive us of access to three-fourths of the people in the United States. The majority of all the converts which we have made since the revolution, were by education Presbyterians, or Congregationalists. Why, then, this proneness to ride the high horse of supremacy over their heads? "The iron and the clay" will not mix well. We must do Mr. Wesley the justice to say, that his followers, when they have attempted to mend his plans, have often marred them. The General Conference would have done better, if they had preserved the title, superintendent, as it was in the first edition of the discipline. It bears the same relative

meaning to the term bishop, that president does to king. King of the United States, with the same limited and restricted functions of office which the president has, could not be borne. The title would spoil the officer and the people. Old prejudices and associations are not to be broken at will. We can only get rid of them by changing names. I do not hesitate to declare, that if it were in my power, I would change the present titles of office for superintendent—thus superintendent of circuits and stations—superintendents of districts—and general superintendents. Insignificant as these changes may seem, even with all the present attributes of office attached to them, they would, I have no doubt, contribute much to modify the notions of office among us. We never think or talk about bishops in common and sober sense. It is a word which inspires submission or resistance. It has been so long flattered or abused, that it cannot be restored to a harmless meaning, when applied to a living officer.

That some great man will arise among local preachers, is an event to be expected in the order of things. Now, if the spirit of the hierarchy cannot triumph over him, he must become great indeed. You may live to see the day when some one of this order, mighty in the faith, shall begin a career of success in the spirit of an evangelist. No man among us, who does not thus begin, can ever be truly great. The foundation of all ascendancy must be laid in extensive and pre-eminent usefulness. The local apostle of our times must have his seals of mission. These commendatory epistles must be written within, on the heart, and known and read of all men. If such a preacher shall know how to govern, and be conscious of his ability, will it require any extraordinary degree of ambition to induce him to claim the fruit of his labor.

My object in making these remarks, is, to convince you that the present system is calculated to generate the elements of future divisions. No other remedy presents itself to my mind, than for the General Conference to go back and begin *de novo*. The feudal principle and the principle of vassalage must be purged out of our government. It is time to leave off making servile dependents. All who choose, must have the privilege, as they have the inherent right, to be represented in the General Conference. We pervert language when we despoil men of all their religious rights, and then call them brethren.

The Turks, who affect to be a very consistent sort of people, when they deprive the Christians of all the rights of men, call them *dogs*.

A LOCAL PREACHER.

Letter III.

DEAR BROTHER,

I have selected examples from the history of the Roman Catholic Church, because they are found there upon a larger scale than in any other; and as I have already observed, because I consider them as specimens of the history of human nature. I do consider Roman Catholic popes and priests as men of like passions with ourselves. Is it not preposterous to consider their vices as the acts of devils, or their virtues as angelical?

Believe me, when I say that, if I have actually detected any resemblance between your plans and theirs, I do not suspect that it was, or is, intentional. I do not blame you for saying, that the entire details of no form of church government is given in the New Testament, but because you do not follow out the consequence of your position, which you thus assume, as you sometimes do. Why this difference between the apostles and our system makers, who not only fill out their plan to the utmost minutiae, but so provide against all changes and improvements, as to render every thing, from a thread to a shoe-latchet, immutable? Was there not as great a danger of latitudinarianism, and innovation, in the days of the apostles, as now? Why, then, I ask again, did they preserve such a seemingly guarded silence upon the details of church government? Was it not because they looked forward to consequences, and foresaw that no model could be given, which would not be susceptible of abuse or perversion? We, on the contrary, never look an inch before our noses. One swallow with us is enough to make a spring. We must have the bed of Procrustes to measure all our men and means by; the taller must be cut off, and the shorter stretched out. If travelling preachers ever did believe that it is possible to supply a church forever with an itinerant ministry only, must they not have been as blind as bats? And how much further can they now see, who believe it possible to preserve to themselves their present monopoly of legislative authority?

Examine, I beseech you, a few of the premises and the consequences: The Church of England had a local ministry, and Mr. Wesley introduced an itinerant ministry into the Methodist society; therefore, travelling preachers only ought to legislate for the lay preachers, and the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Now, must not every body see that this conclusion savours more of lunacy than of logic. There is no shadow of resemblance in the two cases. But it is easy to foresee, that what happened in the former case, will be reversed in the latter. The Church of England held itinerants in a state of degradation, and they, in self-defence, made a common cause. If itinerants continue to degrade local preachers, will they not be driven to unite in self-defence, and make a common cause also? It is thus that wise men absolve what is written—destroy the equilibrium of mutual interests, and convulse religious society.

Instead of studying the inspired writers, and the commentators, with a view to find out precedents for a hierarchy, which, if they had ever been given, would not have needed the sagacity of commentators to discover them, you would have done well to have read them with a view to imbibe their spirit, so far as to have been able to appreciate that profound insight into human nature, which is essential to all good government in the church. Paul was deeply read in the history of the religion of his ancestors, and he was intimately acquainted with the internal state of the priesthood and the sanhedrim. Were the facts connected with the high priesthood of the Jewish church, calculated, in the judgment of a profound theorist, to recommend it as a model of the priesthood of the christian church? Let it be supposed that Jesus Christ had given all the details for the new priesthood, as circumstantially as Moses did for the old, what security could have been offered that the future system would not be as much abused as the obsolete one? That the office of the christian *pontifex maximus* would not be bought and sold as often, and as disgracefully, as Paul well knew the Jewish one had been!

A system which takes power from the many to give to one; which sets out upon the plan of destroying all equality among brethren, carries evidence on its face, that its origin is not from Him who gave lessons to twelve fishermen—who taught them that they were all brethren, and that their

master was from heaven. It is a hierarchy which suspends and controls the rights of lay preachers and christians, and thinks it does God service in so doing. If all the lay preachers should go off in a body, travelling preachers would take no blame to themselves, and could provide no means of conciliation, because, as I said in my first letter, they degraded this body of men, without any foresight or suspicion of consequences, and this disposition of mind is as little capable of reflection upon the past, as it is of anticipation upon the future. St. Paul's maxim, so salutary to heal divisions, could have no application in this case, as those members of the church who might happen to sympathise with the lay preachers, might answer to the question, who, then, are travelling preachers, and who are local preachers, but ministers by whom ye have believed? That travelling preachers were much more; that they are ministers who make laws for us, and the lay preachers too, without the consent of either us or them.

It was not the abuse of monkery; it was the natural consequence of the institution, that it should lead to a train of evils. This unnatural system is not peculiar to the Romish church, as is evident from the existence of the Shakers; but it was the giving of those orders, an almost unbounded ecclesiastical patronage, which destroyed all balance, and made the burden and disgrace intolerable to all Europe. In some such way, the monopoly of power, by travelling preachers, may be expected to operate among us. Travelling preachers have now the exclusive church patronage; under this patronage they must needs progress to wealth, and when their wealth shall equal their power, their means of domination will be complete. At no distant day, they must, upon the present ratio, become a wealthy body. It is long since my remembrance, that sixty-four dollars was the annual stipend of a preacher, but at this time a thousand dollars would not stagger the conscience. This you will say is not too much, and I am agreed. I only mean to say, that you alone have the fixing the price of your services by law, and while you have the rule for an hundred dollars in full force, you have opened a new resource: a committee may now say what shall be allowed for table expenses, and house rent, if there be no house provided for the preacher. Permit me to suggest, as a friend, now you have opened the door to the people to contract with the preacher, whether it would not be better for the General Conferene to withdraw

their interference altogether from these matters, by changing the present question, and answer, thus:—How shall the wants of the preachers, &c. be apportioned and supplied by or at the annual conferences, &c.? *Answer*—Those preachers who have not received one hundred dollars, and their wives, the widows, children, &c. shall share of the funds in the hands of the annual conferences, &c. This might, at least for the time being, save the appearance of legislating money into your own pockets, which, by the way, has a very bad appearance; especially, as nobody can foresee where the process is to stop. Already your law admits of a ten-fold increase.

You have all the power, and you get all the money, and all the glory, be the former or the latter little or much. If you can, in conscience, retain the power, what is to set bounds to your wealth and your glory? Will you answer, that the annual conferences are at this time bankrupt, and the families of the preachers are starving? This will only prove, either that you do not work your power rightly, or that the people are beginning to take the alarm. I, myself, have long known, that, heretofore, the zeal to get, and secure the power, has swallowed up almost every other concern; that, in other cases, under the pressure of poverty, the eagerness to get money has become offensive, and, that the injudicious gains of one, has been the impoverishing of many. But all these adverse circumstances will not hinder a skilful hand, yet to come into office, from using the existing prerogatives to some better account—from using them so as to raise travelling preachers to wealth and glory. The wonder is, considering the length and breadth and depth of the foundation, that so little has yet been done. But human nature will be true to itself: Its affections may be suspended for awhile, but, with the means of aggrandizement and fame within its power, its energies will soon again be redoubled. You, and you alone, are a privileged order in our ministry. What favors can you not render to yourselves, and to each other?

A LOCAL PREACHER.

Letters to the friends and patrons of the right of the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, to represent themselves in the General Conference. By the Rev. Nicholas Snethen.

LETTER I.

FRIENDS AND BRETHREN,

I am induced to address you on the momentous subject of legislative rights, in consequence of a notice I have received, that it has become a question, whether it will be proper to send delegates to the next General Conference with our claims, &c. Such a measure in my humble judgment, would be premature. But before I proceed to offer my reasons, in order to obviate suspicion of my motives, I will avow my own sentiments. I do believe, that it is the inherent and unalienable right of every church or body of christians, either personally or by their representatives, to have a voice in the making, forming, and altering of the rules and regulations, by which they are to be governed. I will also define the meaning, which I affix to the term church in these letters. For the sake of brevity, and from certain relative considerations, I include the local preachers with the private and official members, and contradistinguish them collectively from the travelling preachers, under the term church. Now it is well known, that the great and essential principle of church liberty, representation; has never been recognized either by the annual, or General Conferences, though all our rules and regulations have emanated from them. And moreover, that the very rules and regulations which may not be altered or repealed by the delegates of the annual conferences, were made without the knowledge or consent of the church.

The assumption of right on the part of the travelling preachers, must, I hold, be formally and publicly disavowed by them. Is it not evident, that if the friends and patrons of the legislative rights of the church, are resolved to maintain them, (and how can they do otherwise) and the travelling preachers refuse to surrender them, there must be a division? Let no one say, if so, the sooner the better; but, rather let the church give the travelling preachers a reasonable time and a fair opportunity, to make the surrender with as much willingness as possible.

For myself, I must bear my testimony against all compromise or barter in this matter. The right of the church to representation, must be entire, or not at all. Half rights in legislation, are wrongs. All that ought to be asked, or that can be granted, is, that the majority may govern. I can never consent to hold my right of suffrage, as a favor or grant. The right of representation, is like personal identity. We cannot consent to part with it, without becoming accessory to our own destruction. Sooner or later, either directly or indirectly, it must come to this crisis. Either we must publicly admit and declare that the travelling preachers have the right to make rules and regulations for us, or they must publicly disavow the right; or we must lose all confidence in them and consider them as usurpers. When I lose all hope, that the travelling preachers will in due time refuse to legislate for the church, I shall lose my affection for them also. At present, I am disposed to consider their pertinacity as the effects of ignorance, or want of reflection, or error in judgment, either of which it will require time and judicious management to overcome. But I place the greatest reliance upon time. The subject is only just begun to be fairly discussed among us. Heretofore, some of the best men considered, that the benefits of itinerancy would sanctify all consequences. Is there a preacher who claims or covets the power to legislate for the church, for its own sake? It is true, and we are sorry to say it, that there are certain travelling preachers who use great swelling words— But this kind of language, though deserving of rebuke, does not seem to me, to amount to proof positive that they are incurably ambitious. I do not mean to say, that there is no ambition in the midst of this monopoly of power; but that it may be concealed from the subjects of it, under the plausible disguise of zeal for itinerancy. At all events, time will soon introduce a new body of men into the travelling connexion, who will have grown up under different circumstances, and with different views of christian rights. Are there not some among the young preachers, who within the three years last past, have reflected more upon the subject of church rights, than some of the older ones did, in their whole lives? It was, perhaps, commendable in the former state of things, for those preachers who were in favor of the rights of the church, to express themselves sparingly and with caution in the presence of the members of the church. But now, that the subject is fully before the public, may they not

communicate their opinions freely, without violating the rules of prudence. Indeed, from the spirit of inquiry which has gone forth, they will be scarcely able to conceal their views without trespassing upon their sincerity as much as their inclination. I take it for granted, that our friends will be at little pains to conceal themselves. The more publicly they are known, the faster their number will increase.

I submit it therefore for consideration, whether it is not at this conjuncture, a dictate of prudence to avoid every measure, which may have a tendency to increase the jealousy, or excite the resentment of those, who are hostile to the agitation of questions involving our rights; and to weaken the confidence of our friends in our discretion. But will not the presence of any delegates from us at the time and place of the meeting of the General Conference of 1824, induce its members to take the attitude of resistance, and tend to repress free debate and inquiry? Will it not be proclaimed, that the enemy is at the gates? That the standard of revolt is raised—and that the only security of travelling preachers is, in holding the title to church property by exclusively occupying the seats of the General Conference? In the mean time, the members of the church who are ignorant of our motives and aims, and have not made themselves acquainted with the merits of the subject of representative legislation, may be alarmed and rallied round the travelling preachers, to prevent a supposed revolution.

My plan, therefore is, that we continue to encourage our friends to write, and by their writings to disseminate principles, and leave the next General Conference, as free from any cause of fear or restraint as may be, and thus give them a fair opportunity to make a voluntary surrender of a power, the right of which they ought to disclaim. But if they remain inflexible, that we then proceed to organize ourselves into a kind of patriotic societies, for the purpose of obtaining and securing to ourselves, the right of ecclesiastical suffrage, and acquiring a knowledge of our numbers, views and proceedings; and that as soon as we become sufficiently numerous and united, we signify to travelling preachers our free and sovereign will, and let them know, that the time is come for them to yield to necessity, as they would not to justice and reason;—we may add, that if they persist, all the blame, and all the evil of dividing themselves from the majority of the church, must be upon their own heads.

LETTER II.

FRIENDS AND BRETHREN,

Those travelling preachers who are in favor of the continuation of the present powers and prerogatives of the General Conference, to make rules and regulations for us without our consent, or to secure them, are not backward to aver, that the majority of the church are in favor of them also. If the question were put to vote it might so turn out; for, as the General Conference would have the regulating of the business, they might do it pretty much in their own way. The question in their hands will hardly be permitted to assume the form of "to be, or not to be"—to be free-men or bond-men. Were the vote actually taken, should it not be in a form somewhat like the following:—1st. Do you believe that a church or body of faithful men have any legislative rights?—the vote to be taken in the form of ayes and noes; and the noes to be numbered; then let the ayes, or those in the affirmative, give a second vote; thus—Are you willing to give up, renounce and surrender, without reserve, forever, all your legislative right, title and claim by your representatives, or otherwise to make, form, or alter the rules and regulations by which you are to be governed, as members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, to the delegates of the annual conferences, in General Conference assembled? Then let the two columns be added together—that is, those who believe they have no legislative or representative rights, and those who, though they do, are nevertheless willing to give them all up to the General Conference. Now, it is plain that if the majority of the votes of the whole number of members, taken in this way, or some other equally well calculated to prevent deception or error, should be against us, then, upon our own principles, as peaceable christians, we must submit, until, on some future and proper occasion, the vote should be again taken.

I conceive, brethren, that even in cases where the right and the truth of principle is manifestly on the side of the minority, it is not safe to trust the power to govern the majority, in their hands. Neither truth nor right is omnipotent in this world. The doctrine of irresistible grace, and once in grace always in grace, is not in our creed.

But admitting that the majority of the church is in favor of all the legislative power being in the travelling preachers, may it not come to pass, that the travelling preachers them-

selves may become so enlightened as to refuse to legislate for the church, or any body else, without their representatives? Sacred and profane, ecclesiastical and civil history, furnish examples of men refusing to accept of supreme power, when offered to them by the people, and of others surrendering it, and even their own lives, as a sacrifice to liberty. What a redeeming and glorious day for travelling preachers would it be, if, when solicited by the majority of the church to make laws for them, or rather to hold the power to make them, they should answer as the olive-tree, and the fig-tree, and the vine, and not as the bramble answered the trees in the parable, "The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive-tree, reign thou over us; but the olive-tree said unto them, should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? And the trees said unto the fig-tree, come thou and rule over us; but the fig-tree said unto them, should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go and be promoted over the trees? Then said the trees unto the vine, come thou and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, should I leave my wine, which cherisheth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" This parable is, in its imagery, admirably calculated to cure a propensity to ambition in travelling preachers. The olive-tree, the fig-tree, and the vine, conscious of their valuable qualities, refuse to exchange them for the phantom of power; but the worthless and barren bramble having none but combustible qualities, calls them forth to devour the servile trees, who had renounced their right to an independent government, and had been supplicating for a master—for not doing an impossible act, how could they stoop, and even beneath this low, mean bush. Have travelling preachers no fatness, nor sweetness, nor spirit grateful to heaven and earth, pleasing to God, and beneficial to man, which power cannot give, nor the loss of it take away? We trust they have, and may still have abundantly more. Let it be our first object to rouse them to emulation. The love of power has not been universal among priests, nor even among monks. The man who led the way in the reformation, was a priest and a monk, and several of his contemporaries and successors were priests. Shall Germany, and France, and Britain, only, furnish champions and martyrs for the rights of churches against priestly supremacy? Let us hope better things of American Methodist travelling preachers.

As the ensuing General Conference will be the first to meet after our legislative rights have been fairly brought into discussion, I am anxious that the experiment should have a trial, that we may see how they will treat it, as an abstract question of right. Will there be found a mover and second-er to bring forward and sustain the motion? How will it be disposed of? Will the question be debated, &c. &c.? If a division is called for, what number will rise in its favor? Who will have the confidence to vote that the members of the church have no legislative rights! For these are items on which our future proceedings must be predicated, if they approach to correctness. I trust there is not one among us, who is not disposed to judge as favorably as facts and circumstances will warrant of travelling preachers, much less to condemn them all indiscriminately, and without proof, as usurpers of our rights. Moreover, if the General Conference should possibly adopt severe and rigorous measures, it will be very desirable to let all see that we gave them no pretext; and as for any fears of pains and penalties, I am persuaded that if they ever existed among us, they have long since gone by. As conscious of our integrity as of our rights, and resolved by the help of grace, to walk worthy of our calling, no law that can be executed in our church can have any terrors for us.

We shall probably for some time to come be doomed to hear the old logic, or rather eulogy of itinerant power. The duty and purity of the church cannot continue without discipline, and discipline cannot be maintained without exclusive power in the travelling preachers, to make and execute rules! Take away or qualify, or limit the power of the travelling preachers, and there can be no government, take away government and there can be no religion!! If it were not for this means, says a zealous member, we should not be better than other people; and if it were not for that, says another, we should lose all our religion; but the zealous itinerant don't lay so much stress upon these minor matters; the inference from his argument is, that neither a Saviour, nor grace, nor sacraments, nor good preaching, nor any thing else can save us from ruin, without itinerant power. The fatness of the olive, the unction of the holy one, the sweetness and good fruit of the fig-tree, the precious promises and truths of the gospel, the fruit of the vine, the wine of the kingdom, will be all in vain without *power*! O ye trees, let us rule over you! We have indeed wrong headed

men who talk, in effect, at this random rate. Though it is afflicting to hear them, yet we must do all we can to teach them that they are not the whole body; but only members in particular.

LETTER III.

Friends and Brethren,—The difference betwixt principle and practice is in no case more demonstrable and of greater importance than in governments, but this difference is generally confounded or overlooked by the friends of unlimited or undefined power. Any thing praiseworthy that is said or done by an irresponsible officer becomes a subject of ceaseless eulogy. It is to this confusion of ideas, between the principle of power and the practice of men in power, that we are perhaps to trace the tendency of the human mind to idolatry and to canonize saints. There seems to be in every man a kind of an instinctive consciousness of a disposition to abuse power, and a consequent apprehension that it will be abused; when, therefore, a contrary result is witnessed, the surprise is so great and so agreeable, that admiration exceeds all bounds, and wonderful man! or holy man! is echoed in all directions; but if the successor of the hero or the saint happens to exhibit a contrast of character, this feeling is heightened to its utmost degree.

The biographies of our Coke's, and Asbury's, and M'Kendree's, will, it is probable, at no distant day, be enhanced beyond all price in the estimation of all those who may feel the domination of some successors of these primitive bishops, who can see nothing in them worthy of imitation but their power. Now, if the next General Conference should concede to us all we ask, without giving up the principle of right to make laws for us without our consent, must we not confound principle with practice, if we should suppose that our relation were actually changed, or that they had laid us under any obligation of gratitude to them?

The good men who have entailed their power upon us, have not, unfortunately, entailed their virtues upon their successors, and of course have left us without security or antidote against its effects. Though these holy men may be canonized, it will be in vain to pray to them; their names and their virtues will be equally useless to us under the bad administration of their successors. Though it may sound paradoxical, and even impious, to say that the correct principles of bad dead men are of more value, than the good

actions of virtuous dead ones; the assertion would nevertheless be entitled to some regard. This bad man left behind him something good—that good man taught us nothing truly. To admire goodness is one thing, and to know how to imitate it, another. When all the bishops and travelling preachers who maintain the right to govern the church without its consent, shall have died, will they have left behind them a single principle or maxim by which the evils of a bad government may be corrected? The personal vices of men die with them, and the same lot must needs befall the virtues of good men; but the principles of truth depend not upon the virtues or the vices of those from whose tongues or pens they flow, either for their efficacy or durability. The biographies of our bishops, and the acts of our general and annual conferences, will furnish no principles of church government to posterity to guide them through the labyrinth of error or to rescue them from the artful and winding policy of ambitious rulers. It will be of little consequence therefore to know whether they governed personally well or ill.

I offer these hints, brethren, with a view to influence you to direct your attention to principles, as a subject of primary importance. We cannot too carefully guard against the artifices of the patrons and abettors of undefined power. The real and fictitious histories of good kings and sovereign priests, have a tendency to promote civil and religious supremacy; most of these are actually written for that express purpose; and their effects can only be countervailed by a careful discrimination between principle and practice. The advocates for liberal and balanced governments, are evidently prone to expose the vices of irresponsible rulers; and, their opponents of course to find or to create eminent examples to the contrary. Now the tendency in the human mind naturally is, as I have shown, both to admit and to magnify the virtues of men in power. It is evident, therefore, that there is little hope of being able to enlist men generally on the side of liberty, by merely inveighing against the vices of rulers. The most that can be done by this means is, to change men, and that not always for the better. I assume it as a position that we have now, and shall always have, saints enough in our calendar, if the matter were put upon this issue, to maintain the supremacy of travelling preachers. If so, the inference is undeniable, that unless we mean to raise up and strengthen a party, at

all events, we shall rather injure than promote the cause of suffrage, by interfering with the private characters of ruling men.

In regard to ourselves, the question of right, I trust is settled. On this point we can have no doubt. Let it be gained or lost, used or abused, let us be in the majority or in the minority, the right is inviolable; but our brethren are not convinced, and we must not attempt to force them while they are ignorant or out of the way; we must have compassion upon them. The law of Christ enjoins it upon us to bear their burthens. If we had nothing to say, no evidence, no argument to bring to convince them, we might grow impatient of delays, or despair of gaining our cause; but as the case now stands, nothing but our own imprudence or want of skill can prevent success. We can convince our brethren that we do not want power for its own sake; that we will not divide it with them; and that we give all we demand. When we reign, they must reign with us; so they will have St. Paul's wish.

LETTER IV.

It is impossible to say in what manner we should act in maintaining our religious claims and controversies, if we were ignorant of all foreign examples; for, though we are all men of like passions with our European ancestors, our situations and circumstances are very different from theirs. I think I can trace a connexion in religious feelings and manners from the Brachmans of Hisdostan through the Mehomedans to Europe, and through the Roman Catholics to the Reformed. The spirit and temper of the Hindoos as displayed in their *casts*, seem to me to have been transfused among Medomedans and Christians, and to have become the ground of their monopoly of power and bigotry. This unrelenting and intolerant spirit when it commingled with the fierce and barbarian dispositions of the tribes of Asia and Europe, displayed itself in the love of proselytism and reacted with dreadful effect upon the Brachmins who had become too numerous, proud and self-sufficient to give themselves the trouble of making new converts by force or persuasion. And the soldiers of the cross emulating those of the crescent had extended their conquest nearly over the globe; our own great republic is the only country of considerable extent in which this intolerant spirit does not prevail, and even among us some vestiges of it are occasion-

ally sound; an instance of which I may advert to; as the situation of our church property, &c. &c., admits of our being involved in a similar contest; of the particulars I need say nothing, as they have been circulated in all directions by the newspapers. In the Catholic church in Philadelphia, the contest it seems was about the bishop's preachers, and the people's preacher. With us too the appointment of the preacher is with the bishop, and of course a similar collision of interests might happen, and indeed I see nothing to prevent it, if we are governed by the examples which have been furnished us in the countries of our ancestors. It behooves us then to beware of European precedents, our tempers, our manners, and our language should be American.

The familiar term *sect*, for instance, cannot be employed in this country in the same sense as it is in Europe; in the latter country it means those who have separated from a national or legally established church; but among us there are no sects; no bodies cut off, as there is no body to be cut off or separated from. No religious order is tolerated here, for all are equally free. For a man therefore to say in this country, I am of no sect, can only mean, I am of no religion; and not, I belong to a legally established church as in Europe; but if he proceeds a step further and sets up for himself without subjecting his conduct to the investigation of any religious society, instead of being the free man he affects to be; he becomes in fact above all religious laws. The civil law can take no cognizance of him in his religious capacity, and he stands independent of all responsibility to any religious denomination. Religious order and liberty in this country can only be maintained upon social principles. The same powers in this country, and in Europe, in the hands of a church officer, might operate very different effects, as in Europe the civil law may interfere to check or control it.

We have a two-fold part to act—not only to assert and maintain our own rights; but also to respect the rights of others. We must, therefore, it seems to me, if we will not submit to the privation of our rights until we find ourselves in the majority, withdraw from the church and declare ourselves independent. The latter procedure, it is well known, would be much more pleasing to the advocates for the powers that be, than any attempt at enlightening and reforming the people. Whether the few or the many withdraw, the church property will still be in the hands of the General

Conference of travelling preachers; but if the right of church representation obtains, power will be dispensed and property held by the representatives of the majority of the people, as well as the preachers; and these representatives of free men must be governed by the rules and regulations which they legislate. Now can any thing be more plain, than that if each individual member becomes so impatient under his privation of rights, as to withdraw from the church, all hope of gaining a majority is at an end. Our strength must depend upon our union, and our union upon our continuing in common fellowship. Should nine-tenths of the members withdraw, the excellent laws of our country would protect the remaining tenth in the quiet possession of the church property, and such preachers as the General Conference should authorise to preach in the houses. If I really meant to withdraw from the connexion, I should consider myself no more entitled to interfere with its internal concerns, than with those of any other denomination. The laws of our country and of society allow us to go, or to stay, but not to do both. While we continue in the church, we may plead for our rights; when the social tie is dissolved, all our claims cease.

While I feel free to condemn all lukewarmness, all tendency to indifference or apostacy among our friends, I am fully aware, that our greater danger is, where in other cases it has been ever found to be, in some hasty or rash step. Oppression, says the proverb, makes a wise man mad. It requires more than wisdom to endure the privation of our social and religious rights. Our feelings can only be sustained in such a state by unusual forbearance and fortitude. When the travelling preachers begin to find that we are not to be diverted from our purpose, that we neither slumber nor sleep upon our post, nor can be provoked unto wrath; can neither be flattered nor frowned out of our rights, a majority of them admiring our magnanimity, will emulate our zeal in this sacred cause. Let us furnish history with at least one example, of a church achieving its rights from the hands of its preachers, without the loss of confidence and affection, and without division. Such a record will be scarcely less honorable to the preachers than to ourselves. For though it must appear that they held power to which they had no right, their readiness in yielding it, will prove that their hearts were not hardened by the love of it.

LETTER V.

FRIENDS AND BRETHREN,

Few causes have, perhaps, misled more men into deeds of desperate doing, than overcharged accounts of the success of individuals. Great names, and leading names are found in every age and every country; but, after all that has been said in their praise, not a little of their consequence is found to proceed from the rhetorical figure, which puts a part for the whole. In their highest capacity, a part of their usefulness was of the negative kind; they kept others, it may be of less ability, out of their places. Every cause, in its incipient state, is exposed to hazard by a frequent change of leaders. The Luthers, and Calvins, and Wesleys, and Washingtons, did as much by securing and keeping the public confidence steady, if not more, than by great personal actions. A host of great men, co-operated to effect the reformation. The advantages in learning and piety were actually in their favor; and that subsequent eminence to which the clergy of the Church of Rome attained, was, in part, owing to their being provoked to jealousy. Melancthon, as Greek professor, at Wirtemberg, is said to have sometimes had an audience of fifteen hundred persons. What could Wesley have done alone? The success of Methodism, bore about the same proportion to that of the reformation, as to the number and talents of the men engaged.

But neither the ability of the leaders, nor the number and distinction of their colleagues, are to be considered independently of times and circumstances. A train of causes, prepares the way for great events. Times suit men, and men suit times. At the close of our revolutionary war, one of our patriots, who was exulting in our success, was replied to by a royalist, that he considered it no great cause of triumph, for America, and France, and Spain, and Holland, and half the British nation, to conquer the other half. This reply is, in point, as far as the agency of individuals is in consideration. Washington lived to concentrate and keep the public confidence steady. This, to be sure, is matter of great praise; but of itself, could not have ensured success. We had foreign friends and allies; and at home, the balance of learning and talent, as well as of members, were in favor of independence. Our congress, and our camp, abounded in men of genius and education; men

ready-made for the work which was made for them. The same cause, and the same leader, under other circumstances, might have been defeated.

In regard to our own cause, (the right of church representation,) my hopes of its success do not rest solely upon its abstract merits, nor the merits of any champion who may rise to maintain it, but also upon the signs of the times. I trust the time, the set time, to favor it, is come; and I am deceived if the weight of talent is not on our side. We have a goodly number of men in the ministry, and in the church, who understand and love the subject. And the discussion of it cannot fail to wake up and call forth much hidden talent. Genius slumbers and affection languishes among us, for the want of incitement and concentration. It is not enough to cry liberty or death; our motto should be, "*we honor our rights, and we will have them.*" I hope to see the day, when every travelling preacher, who has the hardihood to assert that he has the right to legislate for a church, without its consent, will be told temperately, but firmly, by all its members, that he receives no thanks for his legislative officiousness, and that his principles are disapproved of.

The poor man, in the proverb, who, by his wisdom, delivered the city, sets, in a clear point of view, the little value mankind place upon individuals who perform incidental acts, though of the greatest importance. This same poor man was not remembered. This proverb is modernized into the well known maxim, "Republics are ungrateful." But republicans must know the nature and value of liberty, achieve it themselves, and be the protectors and guardians of their own rights. If a few men secure to us our legislative rights, without our hearty co-operation, neither they, nor their benefits, will be remembered. A war of eight years, was, probably as necessary to teach our countrymen the value of their rights as to secure them.

We have proclaimed to the world our principles and our views. May I not say, that we neither contend for men nor measures; but for a principle of right. Power is not satisfied with temporary dominion; it ever aims to extend and perpetuate itself to all generations. The men who have labored all their lives, to maintain the right to make laws for their contemporaries, without their consent, cannot die in peace, unless they can impose this system upon all posterity. One of their most pleasing anticipations, on a

dying bed, is, that unborn millions will live without a vestige or shadow of legislative rights. Not so with us, brethren. It is no concern of ours who shall govern, or how our posterity may be governed. All our aim is, to transmit to them the right to choose, and to make laws for themselves. But this precious legacy we cannot transmit to our successors, unless we, ourselves, enjoy it. These remarks are not suggested by fear or jealousy. I should hail the appearance of any man, among us, with integrity and talents sufficient to qualify him for a leader; but the absence of such a man neither fills me with despair nor discouragement. If we are true to ourselves, and to our cause, we must make many friends, and the man who is worthy to go before us, cannot long be concealed. We stand in need of no factitious ecclesiasticism, (if I may coin a word.) Is there a Methodist in the United States who would blush to be called a lover of the rights of his church? No. The men who follow in the train of certain busy, and certain noisy preachers, are bewildered and confounded. It will be a work of time to recover them to their reflection. But the first day that they are left to think for themselves, they will think as we do. Our cause is so plain, so simple, so identical, that as soon as the dust, which has been thrown to obscure it, subsides, there will be no dissent of opinion; no halting; no equivocating. From centre to circumference, but one voice will be heard—our rights—renounce our rights!—give us our rights, O ye travelling preachers! If we choose to let you legislate for us, put it in our power to do so, by proclaiming to the world, that you have no right to make laws for us without our consent.

My counsel still is, brethren, let us be temperate, but let us be firm; and, especially, let us give no occasion to the present holders of power to cherish false hopes, or false fears. On all occasions, let us give them distinctly to understand, that the principle of right is ours, and we never will give it up, or accept any act of theirs as a substitute for it.

LETTER VI.

FRIENDS AND BRETHREN,

The most ruinous consequences are dreaded by some of the travelling preachers, from giving lay delegates a seat in the General Conference. Do these men judge others by themselves? How is it that they cannot perceive that there

is no affinity betwixt a delegated legislature, and a self-created one? Can any contrast be much greater, under the same name, and in the same office? Few stations in society can be occupied by its members, in which they are rendered less potent, and less dangerous, to its public liberties, than that of representatives in a deliberative legislative body. Presumptive evidence is not wanting, that men have been induced to stand a poll for seats in our national legislature, not less for the sake of placing themselves in the way of promotion, than for the sake of the high trust, and proof of confidence, they might thus acquire. I agree with those who think it will be difficult, if not impracticable, to obtain a lay delegation, to attend the General Conference, in numbers sufficient to represent the church. But what would this prove if it were the fact? Not, surely, that lay delegation would be dangerous; but the reverse. Ambition, and the consciousness of power, are the strongest incentives to public action, in social life. How many examples does history furnish, that, if they have not been able to succeed in overcoming the love of liberty by force, they have wearied it out by perseverance. It is altogether idle to talk of the danger of church representation, as the representatives must be subject to the rules and regulations which they make, and are unable to execute them. The only danger to be dreaded from legislators is, when they are self-created and perpetual; and, of course, have executive authority to compel obedience to their laws, without any inconvenience to themselves. These are the men, who can bind heavy burdens upon others, and grievous to be borne, without touching them with one of their fingers. I am so well aware of the harmlessness of a church representation, and by consequence of our being unable to produce excitement sufficient to keep up a lay delegation, when there may be no particular apprehension of danger to the common liberty, that, if the travelling preachers would give up the principle of right, I should be disposed to advise that some provision might be made, in case lay delegates should not be obtained, that the annual conferences might fill up the number; providing, always, that the power be left as entire in the church, as the right to elect their own delegates at every succeeding election. By this means, if it should still come to pass, that none but travelling preachers should compose the General Conference, they should be held responsible, knowing that the church would always have the

power to send their own proper delegates to obtain a repeal of obnoxious rules, &c. In this way, the silence of the church would give consent to the travelling preachers to legislate for it; and the members of the General Conference would feel the responsibility of representatives. The church, in the mean time, conscious of its own independence, would watch over its rights, and communicate its opinions to the preachers, as their equals. My attention, brethren, in writing these letters, has been almost exclusively confined to the subject. In their composition, I have aimed at nothing more than to make myself to be understood. I consider this as no occasion either for fine writing, or for argument. Let us reserve our rhetorick, and our logic, for the opposers of our rights. The great point for consideration now is, how we may best arrange our plan of operation, so as to unite our opinions and energies—how produce the greatest effect with the least labor, and accomplish our object with the fewest chances of defeat.

I solicit, therefore, an earnest and diligent attention to the hints which I have thus thrown together, with little regard to method, as it is time we should begin to think seriously of shaping our course, and of adopting our plan of future co-operation. I hope brethren will be prompt and frank in their communications. I am not confident that my views are the best which can be offered, nor am I tenacious. If any other, in my judgment, equally, or less correct, shall meet with more general approbation, I shall acquiesce. Union and mutual confidence, I hold to be of greater importance, than the most plausible untried theories which can be offered. If it shall be the prevailing opinion that it will be best to send messengers to the next General Conference, be it so.

In concluding, I cannot forbear to repeat, that I hope, whatever may be the plan pursued, it will be ever borne in mind by us all, that travelling preachers are not to be considered merely as members of the General Conference. They bear other relations to us, and we to them, in which we have many things in common, which ought to be equally dear to us both.

It is true, indeed, that they have drank deep in the cup of power; but I have the happiness to know, that there are not a few among them, who are not intoxicated with the potent draught.

Here, a letter from Dr. Jennings to the Editor appears.

On avoiding the appearance of Evil.

When I was a boy, I was fond of listening to the conversations of old men, and would often sit, for hours together, with the greatest attention, if their conversation happened to turn upon any thing new, or surprising. Now it so happened, that those to whose company I had most frequent access, were either careless about religion, or infidel in their principles. I well recollect a conversation which turned upon the pride of the clergy, and a stern old infidel, by one sweeping clause, involved them all in the charge; to use his own words, "from his holiness, the Pope, down to the most pitiful Quaker speaker." There were no Methodist preachers among us then. This indiscriminate kind of censure, against whole bodies of men, for particular vices, is undoubtedly wrong. The virtues of the heart, thanks to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, are not confined to any order or class of men. This disposition to pass universal censure upon whole classes of men, is commonly found to be associated with a confused notion in men's minds, respecting moral virtues, and theoretical principles; but examples every where abound, of proud men being right in their speculations, and humble men wrong.

Whenever any system of ministerial polity is founded upon principles which are known, by experience, to promote the ambition and the pride of human nature, these will generally be found to be the besetting sins of those who act under its influence. Priests are often suspected of ambition or pride, for the same reasons that kings are; and when they are both equally absolute in their sphere of authority, equally above the control of law, and above human responsibility, it is difficult to make exceptions in their favor.

Unquestionably, if there be any truth in history, priests have been actuated by a boundless ambition, in many instances, and the human race have bled copiously to gratify them. Every body has heard of the bishop who made an Emperor hold his stirrup, and walk barefooted, &c. This must needs have been a haughty priest, indeed! The evil of clerical dominion—of a monopoly of power in the hands

of priests—of the ministers of the gospel having unrepresented power to make laws for a church, &c. &c. is of such vast magnitude, that it behooves all who bear the sacred character, to avoid the very appearance of it. But, unfortunately, appearances are against the travelling preachers, and it seems as if several of them are taking measures, rather to increase than to diminish them. For the thirty-six years of our independent existence, the proceedings of the preachers have had a suspicious appearance, and a hawk-eyed infidel, judging from the face of things, would be very apt to pronounce the whole to savour strongly of a love of domination. Appearances of evil might be detected in the council, and some of the first General Conferences. A tradition, for instance, has come down to our days, from those ancient times, that there was a kind of select committee fixed upon, to prepare the business for the brethren, a measure which appeared, for all the world, as though it was intended to keep certain points from being agitated in General Conference. The story goes, that the boys, after sauntering about for some time, on the suggestion of some one, met together to talk over their own matters, as how they might manage, to better account, the *L'argent*. While these things were going on, one came and whispered to the president in committee, that the preachers were holding a General Conference by themselves. The alarm was spread, and the president was despatched with a most loving message for the brethren to come down and take their seats forthwith. We do not mean to accuse brethren of priestcraft, but only to show how the appearance of it may injure them, and of course urge upon them the necessity of avoiding it. Nothing, in our whole history, has so much the appearance of priestcraft, as the construction of the restrictions of 1808. These restrictions have been dubbed a constitution—a term sacred to liberty. Now, let this business, with all its bearings and relations, come under the eye of an infidel, who has no confidence in the regards of preachers for the rights and liberties of the church, and would he not find appearances enough to induce him to exclaim, "Priestcraft still." What have these men done, would he not say? Why, they contrived to monopolise all the legislative and executive power, and finding that they were in danger of losing a part, they endeavor to make all sure, by using the name of a constitution, which was never before employed, except to secure

liberty against the encroachments of power. What would be thought of the Grand Turk, for instance, if he should oppose any plan to favor the liberties of the people, because it was unconstitutional. Constitutions were designed to set bounds to power. The people of the United States, in 1787, made a constitution to prevent absolute monarchy, not to confirm it. The Barons of England met on *Runne mede*, to set bounds to the power of the kings, and not to form a great charter of despotism. Thus might an artful infidel argue against us, from appearances; and might go on to say, that our constitutional abettors have no parallel, except in the Holy Alliance; and slyly and sneeringly insinuate, that those crowned heads, possibly, called their combined councils, in their own behalf, holy, because holy priests had set them the example. Now, in this case, it is of no use to rail at infidels, for judging according to appearances of evil, as those appearances ought to have been avoided.

For bishops and travelling preachers to employ the restriction only to restrain the hands of those who labor to promote liberty, makes them appear so much like tyrants, that, let them assert to the contrary ever so loudly, people will say, "*actions speak louder than words!*" Why will they not be entreated to forbear to argue, that they have a constitution which shuts up all the avenues, by which liberty can possibly enter into the church, so that it never can gain an admittance unless those who have seated themselves in power, shall condescend to open the door. All the circumstances connected with this constitutional claim, which has been set up and pursued with so much perseverance, appears to threaten evil consequences. When our countrymen find every idea which they have been in the habit of attaching to a constitution reversed, and instead of this instrument being a palladium of liberty, as they supposed, becoming the mere charter of self-created and monopolized power, must they not lose all confidence in the agents who produced this transformation. Meanwhile, what can we say, as long as appearances continue to be so much against us? If brethren will have it that we have a constitution, and we yield, it will only involve them in a new dilemma. For it must appear, to the most superficial observer, that it is a tyrannical one; that it took away our rights, and prevents us from recovering them. O thou cruel and unjust constitution, how can we love and reverence thee?

But to proceed with appearances: We have three bishops; one of them says, the giving of power to the annual conferences, in the choice of the presiding elders, is unconstitutional. A second says, it is not; and a third uses the term without any precise technical meaning. He grants that the change will take from the episcopacy some of its former power, but he is willing to part with it. Of course he believes there is nothing in the restrictions to prevent the annual conferences from electing presiding elders. The discipline does not guarantee to the bishops the power of appointing the presiding elders. The zeal and perseverance of the first bishop, it seems, were thought to be deserving of a vote of thanks, which, it is said, was accordingly given by a certain annual conference. It becomes a question, whether there is any appearance of evil in this transaction? Though it is a matter of some delicacy to say in what degree, if any, it betrays an appearance of want of wisdom and candor. Neither the bishop himself, nor any body else, ever pretended to show a single letter of authority. Their constitution is only implied or inferred; that is, it is matter of opinion. The opinions of the bishops, as well as the preachers, differ, and a conference who coincide with one of them in opinion, give him a vote of thanks for thinking as *they* do. Does not this appear very much like a vote of no thanks to those who dared to think for themselves, though their way of thinking went to take power out of their own hands?

It is said, that when a Chinese is punished or chastised by a Mandarin, he returns his most humble and grateful acknowledgment to that high officer, for the fatherly care he has taken of his education. The law, it is presumed, obliges him to do so. Is there any law to authorize an annual conference to vote thanks to a bishop for taking care of number one? These thanks have so much the appearance of flattery, that they seem to come under the command, to "*avoid*;" or there is, at least, so much of the appearance of evil in this matter, that it is to be hoped, that the example will not be followed. Suppose a conference of the opposite opinion, should vote thanks to those bishops who think as *they* do, would not the appearance be something like division between the bishops and conferences. Perhaps those grateful brethren in the south did not think of that.

Those who construe a law in favor of liberty, have cer-

tainly more reason on their side, than those who construe it into a constitution hostile to the rights of ministers and christians. Appearances in the former case are good; in the latter they are evil. Nothing, in these cross questions, has been a source of greater regret, than the strange insensibility to consequences which has been manifested. If brethren can only persuade the annual conferences to vote the conciliation unconstitutional, they will cheerfully give up the power to choose the presiding elders, and this they magnify into an astonishing sacrifice to peace; and yet the art of man cannot divest it of the appearance of sacrificing to their own drag, and offering incense to their own net. As though they might say, we differ in opinion, brethren, but you must first give us all we demand, before we will yield. And when we grant you what you ask, it shall be in such a way as to make you compromit yourselves, and render you forever dependent upon our opinions. Acknowledge before the world, that you were wrong, and we were right. Acknowledge, that neither the ministry nor the church have a single solitary right. But, if they want any thing, they must go, cap in hand, to all the annual conferences, and having gained their petition, with the good will of two-thirds of the General Conference, they may have the desire of their hearts.

Now we begin to feel the force of the maxim, "Physician heal thyself." "Avoid the appearance of evil." Never are our feelings nearer the point of ascendancy, than when we touch upon this subject. We pause—we reflect—and command our stormy feelings down; but our temperance shall not destroy our firmness. We can never consent to receive as a favor, what we claim as a right. Homer tells us a curious story of one Glaucus, who, in exchanging pledges of friendship, became so infatuated as "to exchange gold for brass—an hundred beeves for the value of one." Liberty is so sacred, and held by so many equal and common claims, that we may not seem nor appear to yield it, without a full equivalent. But our brethren do not even offer us brass for our gold. If the choice of the presiding elders were conceded to the annual conferences, upon the proposed conditions, what travelling preacher would have the heart to vote for them, when his ticket would be price of his liberty and the liberty of the church? For these paltry tickets would ever patriot preacher say, and say it with a heart wrung with grief, were our rights barter-

tered away, and what do we get in exchange? Why the choice of one master out of three, (who may be changed the day after the conference adjourns.) Appearances are gloomy. Let the lovers of liberty beware, lest they lose a substance in pursuit of a shadow.

A PREACHER.

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Very serious thoughts upon the manner of electing local preachers for ordination.

"Do as you would be done by."—When men have any thing to do with men, if one party does not feel the force of this rule, the other will feel the want of it.—The characters and names of law-makers are fixed by it. When they do as they would be done by, states and churches are free; but when they make laws for others, by which they themselves are not governed, states and churches are not free. In the latter case, they break this golden rule.

Formerly, local preachers might be made deacons, by a certificate of a certain number of travelling elders, deacons, or preachers; now they must be elected by the annual conference; and the same rule applies in the making of local elders. Who made and altered these rules? Travelling preachers. Who were they made for? Local preachers. When so chosen, do local preachers become members of the annual conferences? No. They must first travel two years, like unordained men. Travelling preachers make laws for local preachers, by which they themselves, are not governed; and, they elect others for ordination who are not of their own body. Is this doing as they would be done by? Let us try the rule by making it work both ways. Suppose that local preachers, in the same manner should make laws for themselves only, and elect travelling preachers to office without giving them a seat in their own body, would travelling preachers submit without a murmur?—or would they not say, you do not as you would be done by?—what right have you local preachers to bind us without our consent, and to tie up the hands of the bishops not to ordain us 'till you choose?—Is it right for you to elect men, whom you will not suffer to have a seat among you? If the local

preachers should thus attempt to govern travelling preachers, would not the latter make all places ring again with complaints of the abuse of power?

It is a very serious thing to trample under foot the rights of local preachers, and then expose their characters in an annual conference to be trifled with. The presiding elder is to take the names of those who are to be voted for, and if he and a few others, who know them, speak a good word, they are elected—if not, who would vote against their judgment? What a range is here for a want of knowledge and good will to display themselves in. These travelling preachers cannot be called to account—a local preacher can have no redress. No matter what is said to injure him, he may neither hear nor reply. Let the church and the bishops be ever so willing, the will of the conference would be too strong for theirs. How came travelling preachers by this power? They took it upon themselves; they hold it because they will; giving account to none for the use of it. As it was not made by the golden rule, so it is not used by that rule. No good reason can be given for the use of this power. It savours more of contempt or of jealousy of episcopal ordination, than any thing else; but——. Even a bishop may not ordain a local preacher without the vote of an unordained travelling preacher? Has not a bishop as good an opportunity to know the character of a local preacher as a conference; and is he not as good a judge of character?

A chapter of the garter, (says Chesterfield, in one of his letters,) is to be held at St. James's next Friday; in which Prince Edward, &c. are to be elected knight's companions of the order of the garter. Though solely nominated by the crown, they are said to be elected; because there is a pretended election, &c. There, every knight pretends to write a list of those for whom he intends to vote—taking care, however, to insert the names of those who are really elected; then the Bishop of Salisbury, who is always the Chancellor of the order, goes round the table, and takes the paper of each knight, pretends to look into them, and then declares the majority of votes to be for those persons who are nominated by the crown, &c. All ceremonies, says this father, to his son, are very silly things, &c. Is not our ordination reduced, by the power of the conference, in the case of local preachers, to a mere ceremony. All that the local preachers and the bishops do, is pretty much in sub-

stance like the chapter of the garter. The annual conference, in our case, is in the place of the king. It is wonderful to think how tamely our bishops submit to the *androïdes* of the annual conference. But that travelling preachers should continue to maintain and exercise this sovereign power between local preachers, and to look this great and free people, the citizens of the United States, in the face, without blushing, is passing strange. If any thing were really given, or meant to be given, in this vote, by the voters, one would not feel so much surprise and regret. But, as travelling preachers do not intend to raise an ordained local preacher to any measure of power above that of a lay preacher, or a noviciate, and subject a local elder to a two years' probation before he can be a member of an annual conference, it seems as though they not only held ordination in contempt, but meant to mar the work of their own hands. A stranger who should judge by the fears and cautions which appear in the proofs of our ordination, would be led to suppose, that an ordained local preacher is, among us something more than common. Nothing like it, he and his office are still cyphers; a thousand of them stand as naughts, without some travelling integer. A thousand local elders could not take into the church a single member, or govern one; but it requires not ordination in a travelling preacher to do either. It would be desirable to know if there be any such cases in the records of the church, or whether they are worth any thing. All the cases now recollected differ from ours, as they exalt ordination, instead of tending to debase it. Really, travelling elders, who are so very zealous of episcopal ordination, might, one would think, forbear this kind of officiousness, out of respect for the holy hands of the bishops; and if they cannot get the better of their fears of local elders, take them into their own body, where they can watch over them for good. What more can a Presbyterian do to lower a bishop, than travelling preachers have done, who will not trust him to ordain a deacon without their consent? But all this is done, it seems, to guard the travelling cause. Need these brethren now be told, that the thing they greatly feared has come upon them; that the very colored people do without them or their bishops. In a country so free as this, why will men dream of force to compel opinion!

St. Paul said, he did not write certain things to shame a church, and it were to be wished that there were room in

this case to say the same; but there is truly matter for shame; brethren ought to blush at the thought of this unheard of power. Ordination was kept back from local preachers for years, in spite of the bishops, and now it is given in a way only calculated to humble them both, and exalt the annual conferences. The qualifications for our holy orders being pointed out, let the persons to be ordained come properly recommended to the bishops, by the body of which they are members, and let it be the bishop's duty to see that they are not imposed upon; and, not let one order of elders ride over the heads of another. All the world might be challenged to show the justice of the present manner of electing local preachers for ordination. It ought to be the business of the over-looker, to see that the local conferences do their duty. It is not right to transfer their work to the annual conferences, who have neither time nor place to do it in; and if they had, they are not able to judge of men and things of which they have not the knowledge.

No. 42.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. iii. September, 1822, No. v. page 196.

Neal's History of the Puritans.

In looking over Mr. Hooker's life, I found some short notice of Mr. Travers, whom Mr. Hooker says he believes to be a good man. This excited my curiosity to know more about Mr. Travers, and the nature of the dispute between him and Mr. Hooker. I found in Neal, the account from which I have made the following extracts; which may, perhaps, be interesting to several of your readers, as the history is rather a scarce book among those who have not descended from Puritan families.

The Rev. Mr. WALTER TRAVERS, B. D. some time Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, already mentioned, came into trouble this year, 1634. He had been ordained at Antwerp, and being an admired preacher, and a fine gentleman, and of great learning, he became domestic chaplain to Secretary Cecil, and Lecturer of the Temple. Dr. Alvey the master, dying about this time, Travers was recommended by him and the benchers to succeed him. Archbishop Whitgift interposed—unless he should be re-ordained according to the usage of the church of England, &c. upon

which Mr. Hooker was preferred. Mr. Travers had been ordained at Antwerp, according to the form used among the reformed on the continent, which he would not renounce. Mr. Travers had been lecturer at the Temple about two years with Mr. Hooker, but with very little harmony. The writer of Hooker's life reports, that the morning sermon spoke the language of *Canterbury*, the afternoon that of *Geneva*. Hooker complaining of this usage, the archbishop took the opportunity to suspend Mr. Travers at once, without any ceremony; for, as he was going up into the pulpit to preach on the Lord's day afternoon, the officer served him with a prohibition upon the pulpit stairs; upon which, instead of a sermon, he acquainted the congregation with his suspension, and dismissed them. The reasons given for it were, 1. That he was not ordained according to the forms of the church of England: 2. That he had broken the orders of the 7th of the Queen. That disputes should not be brought into the pulpit. Mr. Travers drew up his own vindication, &c. in which he complains of being judged and condemned before he was heard, &c. &c. Mr. Hooker wrote an answer, which he concludes by saying that I ought to have complained to the House of Commons, and not have confuted him in the pulpit. The suspension was not taken off, and he accepted an invitation into Ireland, and he became Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, where he was tutor to the famous Dr. Usher. But being driven from thence by the wars, he returned into England, and spent the remainder of his days in silence, obscurity, and great poverty; he was a learned man, a polite preacher, an admirable orator, and one of the worthiest divines of his age. But all these qualifications put together, could not atone for the single crime of non-conformity.

But the most celebrated performance, was Mr. Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity in viii. books; the four first of which was published this year; the fifth in 1597, and the three last not till many years after his death, for which reason some have suspected them to be interpolated, though they were deposited in the hands of A. B. Abbot, from whose copy they were printed about the beginning of the civil wars. It is esteemed the most learned defence of the church of England, wherein all that would be acquainted with its constitution, may see upon what foundation it is built. Mr. Hooker began his work while master of the temple. He finished his work and his life in 1600, and in the 47th year of his age.

The chief principles upon which this learned author proceeds are—"That though the holy scriptures are a perfect standard of doctrine, they are not a rule of discipline or government: Nor is the practice of the apostles an invariable rule or law to the church in succeeding ages; because, they acted according to the circumstances of the church in its infant and persecuted state: Neither are the scriptures a rule of human action; so far as that, whatsoever we do in matters of religion, without their express direction or warrant is sin; but many things are left indifferent: The church is a society like *others*, invested with powers to make what laws she apprehends reasonable, decent, or necessary, for her *well-being and government*; provided, they do not interfere with, or contradict the laws and commandments of the holy scriptures: Where the scripture is silent, human authority may interpose; we must then have recourse to the reason of things, and the rights of society: It follows from hence that the church is at liberty to appoint ceremonies, and establish order within the limits above mentioned; and her authority ought to determine what is fit and convenient: All who are born within the confines of an established church and are baptized into it, are bound to submit to its ecclesiastical laws; they may not disgrace, revile, or reject them at pleasure: The church is their mother, and *has more than a maternal power over them*: The positive laws of the church not being of a moral nature, are mutable, and may be changed; or reversed by the same powers that made them; but while they are in force they are to be submitted to, and such penalties as the church in her wisdom shall direct."

The 4th and 5th propositions, are the main pillars of Mr. Hooker's fabric, and the foundation of human establishments, viz: *That the church, like other societies, is invested with power to make laws for its well-being; and that where the scripture is silent, human authority may interpose.* All men allow, that human societies may form themselves after any model, and make what laws they please for their well being; and that the christian church has some things in common with all *societies*, as such; as the appointing time and place, and the order of public worship, &c. but it must be remembered that the christian society is not a mere *voluntary society*, but a community formed and constituted by Christ, the *sole judge and law-giver* of it, who has made sufficient provision for its *well-being* to the end of the world. It does not appear in the new testament, that the church is em-

powered to amend or alter the constitution of Christ, by creating new offices or making new laws; though the christian world has ventured upon it. Christ gave his church *prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers* for the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of his body; but the successors of the apostles, in the government of the church, apprehending these not sufficient, have added *Patriarchs, Cardinals, Deans, Arch-Deacons, Canons*, and other *officials*. The church is represented in scripture as a *spiritual body*; her ordinances, privileges, and censures, being purely such; but latter ages have wrought the civil powers into her constitution, and kept men within her pale by all the terrors of this world, as *fines, imprisonments, banishments, fire and sword*. It is the peculiar excellence of our gospel worship to be *plain and simple*, free from the yoke of *Jewish* ceremonies, but, (others) thinking this a defect, have loaded it with numberless ceremonies of their own invention; and, though there are laws in the scripture sufficient for the direction of the church as instituted by Christ and his apostles, they have thought fit to add so many volumes of ecclesiastical laws, canons and injunctions, and to have confounded, if not subverted the laws of Christ.

Whereas, if men considered the church as a *spiritual body*, constituted by Christ its sole law-giver for *spiritual purposes*, they would then see that it had no concern with their civil rights, properties, and estates, nor any power to force men to be of its communion, by the pains and penalties of this world. The laws of the New Testament would appear sufficient for the well being of such a society; and in cases where there are no particular rules and injunctions, that it is the will of Christ, and his apostles, there should be liberty and mutual forbearance, there would then be no occasion for *christian courts* (as they are called) nor for the interposition of human authority any further than to keep the peace. Upon the whole, as far as any church is governed by the laws and precepts of the New Testament, so far it is a church of Christ; but when it sets up its own by-laws as terms of communion, or works the policy of the civil magistrate into its constitution, it is so far a creature of the state.

Mr. Hooker's two last propositions are inconsistent with the first principles of the reformation, viz: that all who are born within the confines of an established church, and are baptised into it, are bound to submit to its ecclesiastical

laws, under such penalties as the church in her wisdom shall direct. Must I then be of the religion of the country where I am born? that is, at Rome, a Papist; in Saxony, a Lutheran; in Scotland, a Presbyterian; and in England, a Diocesan Prelatist; and this under such penalties as the church shall think fit? Must I believe as the church believes, and submit to her laws, right or wrong? Have I no right as a man and a christian, to judge and act for myself, &c.?

From general principles, Mr. Hooker proceeds to vindicate the particular rites and ceremonies of the church, and clear them from all the exceptions of the Puritans, which may easily be done when he has proved that the church has a discretionary power to appoint what ceremonies and establish what order she thinks fit; he may then not only vindicate the ceremonies of the church of England, but all those of the church of Rome, for no doubt that church alleges all their ceremonies conducive to her well being, and not inconsistent with the laws of Christ."

To these masterly views of Mr. Neal, on which our countrymen have acted, we may add a note of the editor of the work. To Mr. Neal's remarks (continues he) on the principles of "Ecclesiastical Polity," it may be added: that how just and conclusive soever these principles are in themselves, they do not and cannot apply to the vindication of our (English) religious establishment, 'till it be proved that its ceremonies and laws were fixed by the church. In whatever sense the word church is used; this is not the fact. Whether you understand by it "a congregation of faithful men" or "all ecclesiastical persons," or any order of men who are set apart by christianity, and dedicated to this very purpose of public instruction;" in neither sense were the forms and opinions of our established religion settled by the church. They originated with royal pleasure; they have changed as the will of our princes have changed; they have been settled by acts of Parliament, formed illegally, corrupted by pensions, and overawed by prerogatives, and they constitute part of the statute law of the land." See Neal's History, vol. 1, chap. v. vi. viii.

I cannot forbear, before I conclude, to solicit the attention of our brethren to this subject; on which, more than almost any other, they are apt to be muddy-headed. If Mr. Hooker's views had been followed by our legislators, they

would have marred our religious liberties. Mr. Neil's remarks, that "in cases where there are no particular rules and injunctions, it is the will of Christ and his apostles that there should be liberty and mutual forbearance," ought to be written on our hearts. His remarks are equally excellent against setting up our by-laws as terms of communion; an error of which even Americans are not yet cured.

DOKEMASIUS.

No. 43.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. iii. October, 1823, No. vi. page 208.

Burke on the Popery Laws.

MR. STOCKTON,

I have sent you an extract from a tract of Mr. Edmund Burke, relative to the laws against Popery in Ireland. This extract, I own, is rather too long, but cannot well be more abridged. As I have appeared in my proper name upon the subject of church government, in the Repository, and it will be difficult to meet and answer all objections, will it not be best at once to furnish an example of the masters by whom I have been taught?

N. SNETHEN.

"The system which we have just reviewed, and the manner in which religious influence on the public mind is made to operate upon the laws, concerning popery in Ireland, is, in its nature, very singular, and differs, perhaps, essentially, and to its disadvantage, from any scheme of religious persecution now existing in any other country in Europe; or which has prevailed in any time or nation, with which history has made us acquainted.

"The first and most capital consideration, with regard to this, as to every object, is the extent of it; and here it is necessary to premise, this system has for its object no small sect or party; but, a very numerous body of men—a body which comprehends at least two-thirds of that whole nation; it amounts to 2,800,000 souls; a number for the materials constituent of a great people. Now, it is well worthy of a serious and dispassionate examination, whether such a system, respecting such an object, be, in reality, agreeable to any sound principles of legislation, or any authorised

definition of law; for, if our reasons and practices differ from the general informed sense of mankind, it is very moderate to say, that they are at least suspicious.

"This consideration of the magnitude of the object, ought to attend us through the whole inquiry; if it does not always affect the reason, it is always decisive on the importance of the question. It not only makes in itself a leading point, but complicates itself through every other part of the matter, giving every error, minute in itself, a character and significance from its application; it is, therefore, not to be wondered at, if we perpetually recur to it in the course of this essay.

To guard against "substantial faults, which contradict the nature and end of law itself; faults not arising from the imperfection, but from the misapplication and abuse of our reason. As no legislator can regard the *minima* of equity, a law may, in some instances, be a just subject of censure, without being at all an object of repeal. But if its transgressions against common right, and the end of just government, should be considerable in their nature, and spreading in their effects, as this objection goes to the root and principle of the law, it renders it void in its obligatory quality on the mind, and, therefore, determines it as the proper object of abrogation and repeal, so far as regards its civil existence. The objection here is by no means on account of the imperfection of the law; it is on account of its erroneous principle; for, if this be fundamentally wrong, the more perfect the law is made, the worse it becomes. It cannot be said to have the properties of genuine law, even in its imperfections and defect. The true weakness and opprobrium of our best constitutions, is, that they cannot provide beneficially for every particular case, and thus fill, adequately to their intentions, the circle of universal justice. But where the principle is faulty, the erroneous part of the law is beneficial, and justice only finds refuge in those holes and corners which had escaped the sagacity and inquisition of the legislator. The happiness and misery of multitudes can never be a thing indifferent. A law against the majority of the people, is, in substance, a law against the people itself: its extent determines its invalidity; it even changes its character as it enlarges its operation; it is not particular injustice, but general oppression; and can no longer be considered as a private hardship,

which might be borne ; but spreads and grows up into the unfortunate importance of a national calamity.

"Now, as a law directed against the mass of the nation, has not the nature of a reasonable institution, so neither has it the authority ; for, in all forms of government, the people is the true legislator, &c. But though the means, and, indeed, the nature of a public advantage, may not always be evident to the understanding of the subject, no one is so gross and stupid as not to distinguish between a benefit and an injury. No one can imagine, then, an exclusion of a great body of men, not from favours, privileges, and trusts, but from the common advantages of society, can ever be a thing intended for their good, or can ever be ratified by any implied consent of theirs. If, therefore, at least, an implied human consent is necessary to the existence of a law, such a constitution cannot, in propriety, be a law at all.

"But, if we would suppose that such a ratification was made, not virtually, but actually, by the people ; not representatively, but even collectively, still it would be null and void. They have no right to make a law prejudicial to the whole community, even though the delinquents, in making such an act, should be themselves the chief sufferers by it ; because it would be made against the principles of a superior law, which it is not in the power of any community, or of the whole race of man to alter. I mean the will of Him who gave us our nature, and, in giving, impressed an inviolable law upon it. It would be hard to point out any error more truly subversive of all the order and beauty, of all the peace and happiness of human society, than the position, that any body of men have a right to make what laws they please, or that laws can derive any authority from their institution merely, and independent of the quality of the subject matter. No arguments of policy, reason of state, or preservation of the constitution, can be pleaded in favor of such a practice. They may indeed impeach the frame of that constitution ; but can never touch this immovable principle. This seems to be, indeed, the doctrine which Hobbs broached in the last century, and which was then so ably and so frequently refuted. Cicero exclaims, with the utmost indignation and contempt, against such a notion ; he considers it not only as unworthy of a philosopher, but of an illiterate peasant ; that of all things this was the most truly absurd, to fancy that the rule of justice was to be taken from the constitutions of commonwealths,

or that laws derive their authority from the statutes of the people, the edicts of princes, or the devices of judges.

"In reality there are two, and only two foundations of law ; and they are, both of them, conditions without which nothing can give it any force : I mean equity and utility. With regard to the former, it grows out of the great rule of equality, which is grounded upon our common nature, and which *Philo*, with propriety, calls the mother justice. All human laws are, properly speaking, only declaratory ; they may alter the mode and application, but have no power over the substance of original justice. The other foundation of law, which is utility, must be understood not of partial or limited, but of general or of public utility, connected in the same manner with, and derived directly from our rational nature ; for, any other utility may be that of a robber ; but cannot be that of a citizen ; the interest of the domestic economy, and not that of a member of a commonwealth. This present equality can never be the foundation of statutes, which create an artificial difference among men, as the laws before us do, in order to induce a consequential inequality in the distribution of justice. Law is made for human action, respecting society, and must be governed by the same rules of equity which govern every private action ; and so Tully considers it in his offices.

"If any proposition can be clear of itself, it is this, that a law which shuts out from all secure and valuable property, the bulk of the people, cannot be made for the utility of the party so excluded. This, therefore, is not the utility which Tully mentions. But if it were true, (as it is not,) that the real interests of the community could be separated from the happiness of the rest, still it would afford no just foundation for a statute providing exclusively for that interest at the expense of the other ; because it would be repugnant to the essence of law, which requires that it be made, as much as possible, for the benefit of the whole. If this principle be denied, or evaded, what ground have we left to reason on ? We must, at once, make a total change in all our ideas, and look for new definitions of law. Where to find it, I confess myself at a loss. If we resort to the fountains of jurisprudence, they will not supply us with any thing that is for our purpose. (Mr. Burke then quotes *Paulus* and *Saurez*, who support him, &c.) Partiality and law are contradictory terms. Neither the merits, nor the ill deserts ; neither the wealth, nor the importance, nor the

indignity, or obscurity of the one part or the other, can make any alteration in this fundamental truth. On the other hand, I defy any man living to settle a correct standard, which may discriminate between equitable rule and the most direct tyranny. For, if we can once prevail upon ourselves, from the strictness and the integrity of this principle, in favor even of a considerable party, the argument will hold for one that is no less so; and thus we shall go on, narrowing the bottom of public right, until, step by step, we arrive, though after no very long or very forced deduction, at what one of our poets calls the erroneous faith—the faith of the many created for the advantage of a single person. I cannot see a glimmering of distinction to evade it; nor is it possible to allege any reason for the proscription of so large a part of the kingdom, which would not hold equally to support, under parallel circumstances, the proscription of the whole.

“I am sensible that these principles, in their abstract right, will not be very strenuously opposed. Reason is never inconvenient but when it comes to be applied. Mere general truths interfere very little with the passions. They can, until they are roused by a troublesome application, rest with great tranquility, side by side, with tempers and proceedings the most opposite to them. Men want to be reminded who do not want to be taught; because, those original ideas of rectitude, to which the mind is compelled to assent, when they are proposed, are not always as present as they ought to be. When people are gone, if not into a denial, at least into an oblivion of those ideas; when they know them as barren speculations, and not as practical motives for conduct, it will be proper to press, as well as offer them to the understanding; and when one is attacked by prejudices which aim to intrude themselves into the place of law, what is left for us but to vouch and call to warrantry those principles of original justice from whence alone our title to every thing valuable in society is derived? Can it be thought to arise from a superfluous, vain parade of displaying general and uncontroverted maxims that we should revert, at this time, to the first principles of law, when we have directly under our consideration a whole body of statutes, which, I say, are so many contradictions, which their advocates allow to be so many exceptions to those very principles? Take them in the most favorable light, every exception from an original and fixed rule of

equality and justice ought, surely, to be very well authorised in the reason of their deviation, and very rare in their use; for, if they should grow to be frequent, in what would they differ from an abrogation of the rule itself? By becoming thus frequent, they might even go further, and, establishing themselves into a principle, convert the rule into the exception. It cannot be dissembled that this is not at all remote from the case before us, where the great body of the people are excluded from all valuable property—where the greatest and most ordinary benefits of society are conferred as privileges, and not enjoyed on the footing of common rights. It has been shown, I hope, with sufficient evidence, that a constitution against the interests of the many, is rather of the nature of a grievance than a law; that, of all grievances, it is the most mighty and important; that it is made without due authority, against all the acknowledged principles of jurisprudence; against the opinions of the great lights of that science; and that such is the tacit consent even of all who act in the most contrary manner. There is not such a convenient ductility in the human understanding, as to make us capable of being persuaded that men can possibly mean the ultimate good of the whole society, by rendering miserable the greater part of it; or that any one has such a reversionary benevolence as seriously to intend the late good of a whole posterity, who can give up the present enjoyment which every honest man must have in the happiness of his contemporaries. Every body is satisfied that a conservation and secure enjoyment of our natural rights, is the great and ultimate purpose of civil society; and that, therefore, all forms, whatsoever, of government, are only good as they are subservient to that purpose to which they are entirely subordinate. Now, to aim at the establishment of any form of government, by sacrificing what is the substance of it; to take away, or, at least, to suspend the rights of nature, in order to an approved system for the protection of them; and for the sake of that about which men must dispute forever; to postpone these things about which they have no controversy at all, and this not in minute, but in large and principal objects, is a procedure as preposterous and absurd in argument, as it is oppressive and cruel in its effects; for the Protestant religion, nor (I speak with reverence, I am sure) the truth of our common christianity is not so clear as this proposition:

that all men, at least the majority of men, in the society, ought to enjoy, the common advantage of it."

Thus, Mr. Stockton, I have given your readers a specimen of the heifers with which I plough. By masters, like this one, ancient and modern, have I been taught to exalt the principles of equity and utility infinitely above the factitious rules by which men continue to render the many subservient to the few. The same arguments by which Mr. Burke's essay on popery laws can be refuted, will convince me that all the rule-making power among us ought to be in the hands of travelling preachers; for we have only to change the property and liberty of the Papists of Ireland, for the right of suffrage in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and all the irresistible logic of this mighty master applies in its fullest force; here, not the majority, but the whole are deprived of their rights. The rule of right is converted into an exception.

The wide difference between the views of certain travelling preachers and myself, respecting the rights of church members, gives me most sensible concern. Might I not, with some show of reason, make one request of them? As I know all their masters and teachers, and they have not read mine, and it is probable that their minds are as susceptible of the same kind of light as mine, I only ask them to read for themselves. If any man among us, not yet convinced that the church has legislative rights, will read Burke on the Popery Laws of Ireland, and tell me his opinion remains unaltered, then shall I begin to distrust the truth of my own convictions, or the correctness of my conclusions. But I shall not believe, until I see it, that even this short and imperfect extract can be read and understood without shaking confidence in legislative monopolies, in church as well as in state. My six letters are so arranged as to oblige those who oppose the principle on which they are predicated, either to acknowledge their mistake, or to maintain, in the face of the world, that, if every member of the Methodist Episcopal Church were opposed to the present power of the travelling preachers, they (the travelling preachers) have a right to maintain it. Has an apprehension of this conclusion had any influence over those brethren who advise the discontented to withdraw?

Letters on Church Government, inscribed to the Reverend William McKendree, by Martin Luther—Rev. Alexander McCaine, begin here.

No. 44.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. iii. November, 1823, No. viii. page 226.

"The Church is in danger!"

VERY HIGHLY IMPORTANT.—We have received a letter from a source of intelligence almost equal to official, which, though it is not confidential, yet we are not authorised to publish it; but some items of information are of such vast importance that we lose no time in laying them in substance before our readers for the benefit of all concerned. A story, the writer says, has been some how gotten up, that those preachers who are in favor of the "*conciliation plan*," or the suspended resolutions of the General Conference of 1820, are friendly to the plan of reform contained in, or advocated by the Wesleyan Repository. And this the writer thinks, though he believes it to be false, is the greatest hindrance and is likely to prove a final one in the way of the harmony and peace of the travelling preachers who are divided in opinion about the election of presiding elders. Our correspondent sincerely believes, and he has extensive means of information, that nine-tenths of the preachers and people are opposed to the plan of reformation contained in the Repository; and yet, if the church is blown up, scattered and dispersed, as it respects its union, peace, and usefulness; it must be charged upon that mischievous publication, the Repository, and the aforesaid opinion of those who consider the election of presiding elders unconstitutional in regard to those of the opposite way of thinking.

We have carefully and repeatedly read over the Wesleyan Repository, and we know of no other plan of reform in the Repository, but to give the whole of the ministry and the church a representation in the General Conference, or a voice in our ecclesiastical legislature. We do not believe that any writer for the Repository or any of its friends, intend to dictate to the representatives of the Methodist Episcopal Church what they shall do, or leave undone; they only contend that the church and the local preachers have a right to be represented as well as the members of the annual conferences. Now if the information of our letter writer is to be relied upon, one of two things must follow; either those preachers do not know what the contents of the Wesleyan Repository are, or they will have no fellowship with those of their travelling brethren who are friendly to church rep-

resentation. But the story, which is gotten up, pretty plainly indicates that those who propagate it and believe it, are ignorant of the contents of the Repository; and that our correspondent has taken more of his information through his ears than his eyes. It is only necessary for us to refer to the article contained in the second volume, entitled "*Warring in a triangle*," to show how free we are of any participation in this dangerous crisis to the final peace and harmony of travelling preachers. We there express our belief that the two parties were so wide that they would not unite even to crush us, though we did not suppose that either of them had any very good liking for us.

It is true that the Repository has always advocated the cause of the election of the presiding elders; but, it by no means follows that this regard to the liberty of others has been reciprocated, or that we really expected it. On the contrary we have deplored the fact, that not a few were only mindful of their own rights. Did the men who got up this story know that the principal writer who has entered the list against the Repository was one of the champions who contended in General Conference for the election of presiding elders? Did they know that this mischievous publication contained a series of letters from Nicholas Snethen, advising the friends of representation, &c. not to send agents to the General Conference of 1824, in order that they might remain unbiassed, &c. The presumption still is, we think, that the fears of our writer will be realized so far that the opposers of the conciliation or suspended resolutions will not unite with its friends; but the cause will not be in the Wesleyan Repository; but ignorance of its contents. We have been grieved exceedingly to be obliged again and again to correct the misapprehensions even of those who have professed to read this mischievous publication, as it is called.

We now take it upon ourselves in the name of the editor and all the writers and friends of the Repository to address travelling preachers upon the momentous subject of their own union.

Dear brethren, you disputed, you divided among yourselves without our instigation or privy. We came forward to advocate and defend our own rights and privileges according to the maxim, he who wont help himself shall have help from nobody. It came in our way, it fell in with our views, to take part in favor of the election of presiding el-

ders; but we made no bargain—we asked no favors for so doing; and some who supported this question volunteered their service and employed their tongues and pens to put the Wesleyan Repository down, or to destroy it in its infancy. As we courted neither party, so have we not identified ourselves with either party: we have spoken of you both on all occasions as an independent or a third party would speak. We have seen no reason, nor do we now see any, why a preacher may not oppose the suspended resolutions and yet be in favor of the suffrage of the church. The presiding elders are executive officers and the representatives might perhaps see cause to leave their appointment in the present hands, or modify it, or place it under some arrangement entirely new, or abolish the office.

Now, brethren, unite and agree among yourselves if you can; but in the name of mercy and truth spare us the blame of the beginning or the continuance of your divisions. We are innocent of this thing. We sowed not those seeds of discord among you. We have separated no chief friends. If you who are opposed to the conciliation will acknowledge no travelling preacher as a brother who espouses the cause of church representation, and if there be any who are disposed to make their peace with you by sacrificing the cause of the church, we say let him do so; and we believe that all the friends of the Repository, if it were put to vote would empower its editor to give him a certificate certifying his discharge in full of all obligations to us. O, if there be an American, native or naturalized, who can impose such monstrous conditions or comply with them, we will wash our hands in innocence.

TRUE PRINCIPLES.

N. B. The danger is, that nine-tenths of the members of the church and the preachers shall be blown up, scattered and dispersed by the other tenth; and, that this blow-up, &c., is to be effected by a mischievous book which maintains that the best plan of reform is to make no laws or rules without the consent of the majority of the whole of the ministry and membership of the church.

T. P.

No. 45.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. iii. November, 1823, No. viii. page 315.

Letters to a Member of the General Conference.

LETTER I.

DEAR BROTHER,

All the divisions, in opinion, or in fact, among us, of a serious nature, have been as you know, some way connected with the measures or movements of our bishops. Thus the projected council of Mr. A. was not one of the least causes of the division in Virginia, and which proved so disastrous to our interests in that favored region. And at this moment all the travelling preachers and no inconsiderable number of local preachers and members are divided into two great parties, under their episcopal leaders, and might not inaptly be called McKendreeans and Georgians; but, in all these instances, the church has been only the tail. These are most important items in our history. The itinerant *superintendancy*, the soul and life, as it is supposed to be, of our cause; that intended centre and bound of our union, has become the source and fountain head of our dangers. I do not say that these results were intentional. Certainly they were not. But how stand the facts; the council project shook public confidence; and loss of confidence is the avenue to suspicion and division. Mr. George, no doubt, rejoiced exceedingly at the effects of this meditation, as well he might. It was indeed a moment of infinite interest; but this transient feeling of delight served only to make the heart more exquisitely sensible and susceptible of the shock which was soon to follow. Mr. McKendree's measures convulsed the whole conference; wrought up party feeling almost to frenzy, and, as a correspondent expresses the present state of the connexion, "agitated all the widely extended circles of Methodism." From the suspension of the conciliatory resolutions, I date the commencement of the downfall of our bishops' power.

In several particulars it has been asserted by competent judges, that our system is nearly allied to, if not identical with, Popery. Amongst these, the following deserve a particular notice:—1st. The popish clergy make laws for the laity without their consent.—So do the travelling preachers for the Methodist Episcopal Church. 2. The pastoral functions are all derived from the bishops, without whose au-

thority or consent no flock can have a pastor.—So our travelling preachers and congregations depend upon our bishops, who have the sole power of all appointments. 3dly, The right of presentation to livings, which is sometimes in the bishops, or the governments, or the lay patrons, is wholly in our bishops. 4th. The generals or heads of the orders of friars or travelling monks, can send them where they please—so our bishops can send travelling preachers. Here let me observe once for all, that if it offend you to call these powers *papal*, you may name them yourself. I only assert that they existed in the Catholic church before the reformation, and exist there still; and that in every place where they have been in operation, and the spirit of religious liberty has put forth its energies, they have been opposed. This is the point in church history, to which I am anxious to call your attention. What has liberty done or always aimed to do with these high powers? Curb and control them. The spirit of liberty has ever been found to be inimical to such powers and prerogatives as are exercised by our General Conference and bishops. Shall I be told that in this free country these powers have existed among free men for forty years? Were, then, those points of resemblance, though so plain, unperceived all this while?

Have travelling preachers any other alternative but to stand impeached of ignorance or of design? Humbling, as an acknowledgment of the former may be, will it not be preferred to a confession of knowingly and wilfully restoring powers which have ever been held obnoxious by the friends of liberty, and to suppress which, innumerable lives have been sacrificed? But the plea of ignorance, though it may extenuate the guilt of the past, cannot apologise for the future. Names alter not the nature of things. The shifting of a mass of matter into different hands, has no effect upon its gravity. The principles of power are not to be estimated by the professions of the men who hold them, but by their own intrinsic nature and tendency.

All the reformers and dissenters opposed the powers which are now in the hands of travelling preachers and bishops. And the measures pursued at the last General Conference have opened the eyes of many, and will open the eyes of many more, who never before thought sufficiently to examine for themselves.

It will become more and more evident to every reflecting mind, that we must change our ground, or renounce all

affinity and relation, not only to the friends and patrons of religious liberty, but, in fact, to the reformers and the reformation. Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, Friends and Protestant Episcopalians, will all disown us, and leave us among the Lauds and Parkers—the Bonners and the Gardiners—the Becketts and great Gregories—and all the great champions for supremacy and high church politics. It could easily be proved that the obnoxious principles of power exist among us, in many instances, in a more unqualified manner and degree, than in several of the religious establishments. In England, no ecclesiastical law can be enacted or repealed without the consent of parliament, a part of whom are representatives of the people. And in France, though Catholic, the maxim is, the clergy kiss the pope's toe, but bind his hands. The power of travelling preachers are as plenary as it is possible for them be. They can, not only legislate for the church *without its consent*, but according to their own definition, make, and unmake constitutions. Are not these amazing prerogatives to be lodged in a body of preachers? All with whom I have conversed, who were favorable to the conciliation, consider it as little more than nominal. Why then has it produced so much agitation and alarm? In the same way that the scratch of a pin often ends in a dangerous sore, by giving vent to the bad humors and habits of the body. A vast amount of suffering and discontent are annually generated under the present regime. Men's minds have become extremely irritable under this morbid excitement of power. The body social is like the body physical, when the mass of fluids tend to mortification, the least cause may produce a crisis.

The two old friends, whose souls were once like the souls of David and Jonathan, may again be reconciled. The pledges of affection may again be interchanged among travelling preachers; and all may seem to unite; but, in one year after the General Conference, new causes of discontent may be again generated. The kingdom is divided against itself. Changes must ensue; or confidence will be irretrievably lost. One would think that the fate of the peace loving and cautious author of the conciliation, ought to admonish all to beware of half-measures and meditations. The system is sinking under the weight of its own powers. All its disorders proceed from indirect debility. Its papal functions and attributes incumber it more than Saul's armour did David.

Before I conclude this letter, let me remark that the M'Kendreeans, have no cause of additional disaffection towards the Georgians on account of the opinions or actions of the third party, which, since the divisions of the travelling preachers, have risen in the church in behalf of its own right of suffrage. The only point in which they happen to agree, is matter of accident. The Georgians reciprocate no favors with them, nor have they asked any favors. This third party have neither leaders nor toad eaters among them. Conscious of their own rights, they desire not to trick or use artifice, neither do they stoop to fawn nor to flatter men in power.

No. 46.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. iii. March, 1824, No. xi. page 422.

A time for all things.

The importance of times and seasons, is seldom if ever overlooked among practical men in the ordinary concerns of life; but in matters of government and religion, they are unaccountably neglected. There is reason to fear, that not a few of our brethren will suffer the time for reform to go by; and, when it is too late, be the first to complain. Instances of this kind we have oftener witnessed. A recent one may be mentioned without, as we hope, giving offence, though most of the parties be living.

During the stir about the presiding elder question, in the General Conference of 1820, a distinguished member was heard to say, your great men, meaning the influential members of the society in Baltimore, are working against us, viz. the friends of the presiding elder's election. We have cause to believe, that it was indeed in a great measure owing to the influence of those great men, that that eventful case took its present attitude. The favor of the Baltimore society was calculated upon from the then appearances. But if our information is to be depended upon, not more than three years afterwards, the senior bishop was addressed by certain official members of the society in Baltimore, to have that station exempted from the jurisdiction of the presiding elder of the district. A movement which seems to us as unseasonable, and as much out of time, as sowing in harvest or reaping in seeding time.

We have long been in the habit of listening to chimney corner complaints, and to other complaints of a little louder

description. And we had often noticed the indications of irritation in the tone of reply, when complaints used to reach the ears of the bishop, of the want of talents in one or more of the appointments of the preceding year. Give us better preachers, was the reply and we will station them. Could any reply be more untimely in the month of a Methodist bishop, unless he could appeal to all who heard him, to bear witness, that he had done what he could, in the proper time and place to increase and preserve the talents of preachers. O the virtues! O the blessings of impartiality! They have indeed been loudly sung. No respect of persons in stationing preachers, is greatly to be commended; but if no talents, and no age, are made equal with talents and age, is not the charge of partiality to be transferred from the bishop to nature and art. If these happen to disagree in their dispensations, which is to yield? The tendency of nature and art is, to make men differ. The impartial bishop treats all travelling preachers alike. We have supposed, that when complaints of the want of talents in certain preachers for certain stations, come from the people, the proper time comes for the bishop to address the members of the annual conferences, making this his text:

"You see, you hear," might he not say, "the inefficacy of my impartiality. It must be now evident to you all, that I can not by my stationing-power, prepare men for places, nor places for men; nor is my authority to say to one *go*, and to another *come*, sufficient to silence the murmurs and complaints of the people. What then can I do? What will ye have me to do?"

Does not necessity point out the course—to encourage talents and age by rewarding them? When genius merits nothing, when mental industry merits nothing, and when age merits nothing, impartiality would require that the names of men should be shaken together in an urn and drawn by lot. We talk as much about gifts as other people; but never in the right time. Times and seasons are the decrees of God, In vain may impotent mortals strive to control or reverse them. The union of the members of the church in favor of their rights, makes the time to gain them. Divide and and destroy, is a maxim peculiarly applicable to church liberty. The division of those who have the right to claim it, is its certain ruin. It will be the watchword and the rallying point in the next General Conference. Let but the opportunity invite its members to call the friends of

church suffrage, a faction, and one part of the church will be played off against the other. These generous legislators will reward the neutrals and the *passives* with a protracted, if not additional yoke. The Repository will be put down, and no complaint will be heard in all our borders; but, will there be no murmuring, no whispering? Rather will not the very men who have flung from them the golden opportunity, be the first to murmur? will not every corner be filled with whispers of disaffection? In truth it will be so. And not a few of these will take *French leave*.

To the members of the General Conference, we would humbly and earnestly recommend it, to be more attentive to the signs of the times than to the gaining of victory. You may, indeed, in all the plenitude of your power, put down the reformers; but, can you pluck up their claims by the roots? can you annihilate their principles? can you eradicate from the human breast all yearning after church freedom among a race of men who live in the very elements of civil liberty? Look well to the matter; the year 1824 may be your time—once past, and you can have no earthly security that you will ever have it in your power to meet again as the dispensers of religious liberty. Independence is not yet declared; but if it be ever declared, it will never be revoked. As writers for a periodical paper, we have little prospect of acting a conspicuous part in a church revolution. Such occasions make their actors and agents. The men of the pen seldom figure in the field. In a crisis you may remember our advice, and may invite our mediation; but, it will be *too late*. All that we could do, would only involve us in the same loss of confidence with yourselves. Our labors are now entirely at your service; and, if we have said any thing wrong, or in a wrong spirit, you can neutralize it by giving up the rights of others.

The time is come to produce changes in men and manners. Genius with us, as a people, must expand; and, with it, the love of liberty. A few of the old men of talents may continue tenacious of former modes and habits, but the influence of liberal sentiments, even if resisted by them, will imperceptibly leaven the young men. The writers of the Repository have gained this point. All parties among us will find themselves impelled to enlarge the sphere of their mental action; they must think more, if they do not think better. *Even the men who will not read, must hear.* The matter will sound out. There is a time for all things.

The full time was come to write a periodical work, and we have improved it.

PHILO CHRONUS.

No. 47.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. iii. March, 1834, No. xi. page 426.

The Feudal System.

The Longobards, or Lombards, are generally believed to have laid the foundation, or at least to have made the earliest improvements of the modern feudal system. That tribe having early left their seats in the northern part of Germany, after many migrations, seized upon Upper Italy, and established the kingdom of Lombardy, about the year 568. In order to enable them to secure their conquests, they found it expedient to divide the conquered country among their chief captains, reserving the superiority to their king: and these captains, after retaining what they deemed sufficient for themselves, parcelled out the remainder among the lower ranks of officers, under the condition of fidelity and military service. The policy of this system was so universally approved in that military age, that even after the overthrow of the monarchy of the Lombards in Italy, it was adopted by Charlemagne, and eventually by most of the princes in Europe. It was introduced into England by William the Conqueror, who, with a view of keeping his English subjects under complete subjection, divided all the lands in England, with a very few exceptions, into baronies, which he distributed, according to the feudal plan, among the most considerable of his Norman adventurers. Feudal grants were originally precarious, being revocable at the pleasure of the grantor; but afterwards they were gradually conferred for life, and finally the title descended to the heirs in succession.

Although, from the nature of the feudal institution, fiefs were originally granted solely in consideration of military services, yet services of a mere civil or religious nature were early substituted in their room, at the pleasure of the superior. And in the course of time, the spirit of the original institution was so far left out of view, that services of all kinds were dispensed with in some feudal tenures; but, in such cases the vassal who is exempted from the services,

must be liable to the payment of a certain sum of money, or something else, as an acknowledgment of the superior's right.

It is well known that few, if any of the civil establishments and usages of modern Europe, can be traced beyond the feudal system. The present lords of manors in England are the inheritors of William the Conqueror's military companions and favorites, and the present landed tenantry, are in the place of the old villains. For though, as we have seen, scarcely a vestige of the ancient military establishment remains, yet, the titles of the baronies are unimpaired. The noble lords learn war no more, and armies are now raised by voluntary enlistment. The vassal no longer renders homage to his liege lord, the title and inheritance descend according to primogeniture.

Such changes has time wrought. So have military masters been converted into civil ones, and ancient castles have been exchanged for splendid palaces. The toils of the tenant fill the coffers of the proprietor in consequence of having converted the sword into a ploughshare. The glorious dominion of mother church in Europe, cannot be traced farther back than the overthrow of the Lombards, whose kings contended with the popes for the sovereignty of Rome itself. Was the holy see in any wise influenced or affected with the feudal principles, which prevailed throughout Europe? Were the missionaries of those times animated with the adventurous and conquering spirit of military conquerors, and stimulated with a hope of correspondent rewards—to a title to the lands of the proselyted countries? In the latter part of the sixth century, Augustine, the missionary of Gregory the great, and his fellow monks, commenced their ministry among the Anglo-Saxons, at Canterbury. Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, who died in 690, lived to see all the churches in England united in discipline and worship. Before the year 700, a regular provision was made for the clergy throughout all the kingdoms of the Heptarchy, by the imposition of a tax, from which the meanest were not exempted. At the death of Edward the Confessor, one-third of all the lands in England were in the hands of the clergy. For the most part, monks are exempted from all taxes, as well as military duty. If there be any truth in these historical notices, we need not surely be at the pains to try to trace, or to prove the title of his grace *the most reverend*, the lord primate of all

England, the present Archbishop of Canterbury, to Peter or to Paul. The affinity of the hierarchal polity to the feudal spirit of those ancient times, is as strongly marked as it well can be, considering the necessary distinction between a civil and religious polity. The offices and the duties of the present incumbent of the see of Canterbury, are as dissimilar to those of its first Archbishop, as those of a modern English nobleman are from those of the Barons of William the Conqueror; but still the titles and the revenues are not put in jeopardy; all is safe and secure to the spiritual, as well as the temporal lord.

Every thing in Europe, in church and state, bears the marks of the ancient feudal customs. The features of conquest and dominion cannot be concealed. But in all this, there is nothing which ought to shock either common sense or philosophy. The original was all of a piece. The views of men were barbarous, the times were barbarous. Darkness covered the nations, and gross darkness the people. Amidst the ruin of empires, and the crush of nations, the fiercest passions of the human heart may be expected to predominate; and we know that they did then predominate. All the foundations of government and religion were out of course. Men knew not how to govern, or to be governed—to teach, or to be taught. Where ignorance prevails, we look in vain for the results of wisdom. The nations and churches of Europe have indeed wonderfully improved in knowledge and virtue; but they have not united inclination and skill, sufficient to untangle the feudal policy of their ancestors. They want, and will probably long want, the one thing needful to the peaceful triumphs of liberty, an Agrarian law. The people have not where to stand.

O America! O my country! thou art free, the title to thy soil is in the hands of thy children, and not in oligarchies of priests and nobles.

Our national existence was begun right. We have no titles to trace to a conqueror. Our lands and our citizens have never been parcelled out to civil or religious adventurers. Yet, strange as it may appear, a feudal claim to the government of the Methodist church has been set up by the oracle of the second bishop and his friends, in his book entitled, "A vindication of Methodist Episcopacy." Charity would lead us to hope, that he did it in ignorance, and not in impudence.

The boys had long been swelling with their triumphs, going forth from conquering to conquer, they claimed the people for their own. Brother Bangs could keep in no longer, and lo! the feudal system stood confessed. Fortunately, philosophy, teaching by example, that is, history, had taught us, that nothing in this system would be permanent, but the title. We have not been wanting in our duty through fear or shame. We have faithfully warned our brethren and fellow-citizens to beware of this claim to the right of conquest, this feudal notion of converting to govern. As the good of the souls of the author's friends are at stake, we hope they will discover the doctrine, as fit only for the dark ages—the Long-beards—and the monks of feudal times, and such sort of folks.

PHILO HISTORICUS.

No. 45.

Wesleyan Repository, vol. iii. April, 1824, No. xii. page 466.

The Farewell Address of PHILO PISTICUS, to the readers of the 3d vol. of the Wesleyan Repository.

Three years of mental intercourse can hardly fail to beget ideal associations, if not attachments. The benefits, whether real or imaginary, that I have derived from the composition of these essays, depended upon your ideal friendship. If you had not read, I could not have written. That the part I have taken in this periodical publication, has tended to improve me in knowledge and virtue, I have all the evidence which consciousness can afford me. Am I not authorised from this data to infer that you have not read to your disadvantage?

In the belief of the rights of the church to legislate her own by-laws or form of discipline, I am fully confirmed; nor am I less firmly persuaded, that the germ or principle of all the tyranny which has been, or can be exercised over the church, may result from a re-union of the legislative and executive powers in the same men, independently on her consent and control. This re-union of powers was at first concealed from me, and perhaps from some others, under circumstances somewhat specious. The idea was held out, that we were in the full tide of successful experiment; profiting by our past experience; and standing upon the

shoulders of our former selves. As a new and spreading people, I own, I was flattered with this notion of going on to future perfection, taking it for granted, that the end must be good, without perceiving precisely what it might be.

It is more than probable that if the General Conference had agreed in their high prerogative matters, that I should not have broken silence. When, however, I saw the travelling preachers themselves divided and embodied under their two great leaders, and their lieutenants, it seemed to me that the time was come to form a *third party, of the people*, to hold in check, if possible, these belligerent principalities and powers. Upon this course I resolved, under an anticipation of all risks and dangers. Both the bishops were dear to me as personal friends; and towards both their seconds, I had ever cherished a full measure of brotherly affection. The apprehended loss of the confidence of such men, is always painful; but, I foresaw that their confidence could not be lost alone; that their displeasure must draw after it, as in a train, the displeasure of many; and, that they had power to create love or hatred.

For your sakes, and not with a hope of conciliating their favor, have I commended my love towards them. As I never felt anger, or ill will, I wished you to know it; and I wish you now to know that I close these essays with the same complacent feelings with which I began them. The magnitude of the subject is too great to place any reliance upon flattery or persuasion. And victory, at the price of passion and strife, would be dearly purchased. The wrath of men worketh not the righteousness of God. With truth, and right, and reason, all in my favor, it would have been unpardonable to have had recourse to personal crimination, even if the opportunity had offered itself. Incredible as it may seem, I still love those who, I have reason to believe, are resolved to withhold from me my rights; but I hesitate not to aver, that this love and this privation cannot exist together forever. There must be a time, when the one, or the other must cease. Love is an affection, not always under the control of volition.

The cause of church suffrage has not been confounded with the presiding elder question. I always considered it both lawful and expedient for the travelling preachers to have a voice in the choice of the presiding elders; and, therefore, always advocated the measure. For that important office, a preacher ought not to be eligible, without

extra qualifications, which should be tested by a suitable examination, before he is put in nomination. But all I have said in favor of the election of presiding elders, has procured no favor for the rights of the church; and though I was the first mover of the nomination being in the bishops, the measure gained no mutual concession. The evidence is abundantly sufficient to convince every one, that this great controversy can only be successfully managed upon its own merits, before the tribunal of the public; and I have accordingly endeavored so to manage it, that it might be viewed on all sides through a public medium.

But is not the public discussion of this interesting subject calculated to beget a spirit of scepticism? I am aware of it, and have been so from the beginning. This is an additional proof of the evil of monopolising power. Its tendency is to generate unbounded confidence. Preachers who hold and exercise the more than human powers of legislating for others, without their consent, if they are not resisted, must be looked up to as more than men. Their power is dreadful; for it is the power of church—life and death. To shake, to unsettle the public faith in such prerogatives, and to say to doubts, hitherto shall ye come, and no further, require means quite distinct. Nothing is more difficult than to fix the limits of declining confidence. "I said in my haste all men are liars." Knowing how liable men are to transfer their doubts from men to God, I have devoted so large a portion of my essays to faith. To this subject my mind happened to be peculiarly disposed by previous habits of thinking, and a train of circumstances. Having theorised much, and speculated freely, I tried my theory upon myself, in and out of the pulpit, and in the order of Providence, two or three years before I became a correspondent for the Repository, had an opportunity to try it in affliction. Disqualified from active labor, by an obstructed and painful respiration, without hopes of recovery, and without any prospect of ever being able to turn the exercises of the mind to any profitable account, faith to me was the one thing needful; the only solace of life, and the antidote to the fear of death. Conceiving it to be my duty, my friendly readers, to warn you to put no trust in man; no, not in princes; and to admonish you to consider that every man in his best estate, is altogether vanity, and that of course your church rights could not be long safe in human keeping; could I do better, than to lay open to

you the rich treasures of gospel grace and mercy, and to show you how sufficient and abundant the grounds are for faith, in the divine veracity of the promiser of all spiritual good, together with the modes of that faith. It is possible, indeed, that some peculiarities in my manner of treating this most interesting point in religion, may be misunderstood, and others successfully criticised; but, I trust enough will remain, at once intelligible and unexceptionable for the purposes of practice and peculiar exigencies.

Need I add, that the only personal interest I have had to induce me to appear in print, is common to the rest of my brethren. I can hope to regain no rights for myself alone. What may be the result of these labors, time alone must determine. Contrary to all human probability, I have been able to follow on to the end of the third volume, and am in better health than when I began.

The period has now come, to bring these essays to a close.

PHILO PISTICUS.

The General Conference met in Baltimore May 1st, 1824, and in consequence of the election of Delegates in the Baltimore Annual Conference turning against the friends of the suspended resolution, the other side had the majority. Some days were spent receiving, reading, and referring petitions in favor of lay representation. The report of the committee disclaimed the right of the principle, and the report passed the General Conference, with the ever memorable words "we know of no such rights" (as lay representation.)

In August, 1824, the first number of vol. i. was published of the *Mutual Rights of the ministers and members of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, edited by a committee of ministers and laymen. Dr. S. K. Jennings, Chairman.

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An Essay on Church Property, by the Rev. Nicholas Snethen.
In four parts.

PART I.

In the discussions between the friends and enemies of mutual rights, it is curious to observe how *predictions* are opposed to statements of facts and arguments. Do we affirm that certain things in our church government are wrong

in principle or tendency; we are told, that our plan will lead to greater evils. In this way an attempt is made to induce a belief, that the present system is the best that can be adopted; and, that in the event of a change in the government, it will only be for the worse. With many this passes for argument, and indeed it has more weight with some people than argument itself. But these foretellings and forewarnings are not dictated by the spirit of inspiration; they are predicated upon an assumed knowledge of men and things, and are mere random assertions. Thus far the friends of mutual rights have compromised no republican nor scriptural principle, and have made no monopoly of property. The right of the book itself is in the public, no individual being permitted to hold the title, and there is no positive or circumstantial evidence to induce a belief or justify a prediction that it will be otherwise. The editorial committee hold it for the reformers. Our church property as well as all power are, in effect, in the hands, or under the control of the superintendents, and should the constitutional test obtain, will destroy all hopes of any legal or regular change for the better. This controlling or disposing power over public property in men who hold an office for life, is one of the essential principles of an absolute government, and by an extension of territory, must continue to increase indefinitely. The disclaiming of all right or pretension to taxation by the General Conference amounts to nothing like a check upon the power of the superintendents over property; but does in fact tend to promote it. Were it in the power of the travelling preachers, by any means, to secure an immediate support from the people, they might use the people's money to control the power of the episcopacy; but in the present state of things they can neither occupy the houses, nor receive the people's voluntary contribution, without an official signification of the executive will.

All the travelling preachers are at the disposal of the superintendents, and so long as there shall be more preachers than there are places to support them, the surplus number must be dependent, and to make this dependence universal, no preacher has any security that his lot to "turn out" may not come next. It avails nothing that the public property is the keeping of trustees or stewards. If the houses cannot be taken from the preachers, the preachers may be taken from the houses. The members of the church have

in reality no church property, and the travelling preachers have none in effect. The latter are tenants at will, and at the end of each year may be removed. Are we not virtually acting over again St. Peter's patrimony, and Peter pence? In monarchies public property is vested in the crown, and of course, in him who wears it; hence we hear of his majesty's arms and armies," and kingdom, &c.—of "we, by the grace of God"—and of "the Pope's bull," (bulla) seal affixed to his official acts. By "the grace of God" is meant the "divine right," &c.

To whom did all the Methodist chapels and houses for the preachers in England belong? Why, to the Rev. John Wesley, this is evident from his deed of settlement. By what right did he hold them? Was it by a divine right? Perhaps not, for it seems they were all given to him by the people; and the laws of England recognize deeds of gifts, and other kinds of donations. It appears to Dr. Armistead, that the hundred on whom this property was settled by its original holder, though they "at this day pursue the very spirit and genius of the Wesleyan organization," have no superintendency and no ordination. Is it not wonderful that an hundred superintendents and perpetual members of the conference, and holders of millions of public property, which is every day accumulating on their hands, should have no superintendency; no one of their own body vested with an absolute supremacy over the remaining ninety and nine brethren for life! Verily this looks a little suspicious. Query. Have these "fathers" of ours, as it respects themselves personally, a faint and confused notion of what would in America be called mutual rights? We will make you president this year, brother, and you shall station us—next year you shall fall into the ranks again, and some one of us will station you. O, these cautious old Englishmen! The doctor is paying them a left handed compliment, which he himself does not understand. We marvel most of all to learn, that these elder brethren of ours can find it in their hearts to hold this precious legacy, and use and enjoy it in their own behoof without ordination, a thing which we hold so sacred, that we can confide it to none but the hands of our bishops; and in case it should ever happen, that there shall be none in our church, there shall be no more ordinations until the elders shall ordain a bishop. "The European church," says this wonderful writer, (he should have said itinerant preachers) in the present day has pursued, and

again "the European societies" (itinerant preachers) have no ordination, &c.

Ah, this property, this property! The hundred itinerant preachers "are never known to locate," it seems "they sustain their high mission, detached from worldly lucre and professional pelf of a monied monopoly, in order to keep sacred the holy ministry." The learned Dr. in his profound lucubrations about monarchy and aristocracy, has not told us yet, whether the right to this church property comes through "the Wesleys as from the fountain of God." Doubtless, if there be any *jure divino*, (divine right) in this business, it ought in all reason to be extended to these more solid and substantial matters, which are so peculiarly liable to be affected by conflicting earthly claims. The value of the divine right to these visible and tangible goods, must have been very apparent to the Jesuits when all their immense wealth in Europe and both the Indies were confiscated.

The hundred successors of Mr. Wesley; who compose the British conference, unite in themselves all the powers and functions that are exercised by our General Conference and superintendents. They are all bishops *de facto*. Our ordination conveys nothing which Mr. Wesley did not give to them. He was not a partial father, much less did he disinherit his first born; we congratulate our British brethren in this thing, that they have good sense enough not to run after names and shadows. There is neither divine nor human obligation binding on our General Conference to confer a life office on any man. We know to a certainty that Mr. Wesley never meant to confer any power for life upon the superintendents which he and Dr. Coke ordained, for he actually had it in contemplation to recall Mr. Asbury; of such an event Mr. Asbury was so well aware, that he took special care to prevent it, by getting himself elected superintendent by the American preachers.

PART II.

We may not say any thing concerning Mr. Wesley's power least we should involve ourselves in Dr. Armstead's charge of blasphemy; fortunately for us, the plan of this essay does not make it necessary that we should interfere with his mode of government or any other. Our subject is church property, rather than church polity. It is matter of some surprise, that the writers upon primitive church government

should have said so little concerning the primitive church property. In whom was the right and title then vested? In the church or in the ministry? And if in the latter, was it in the many, the few, or in one? Property and power in civil governments, are apt to go hand in hand. What examples of this kind are to be found in church history? The poverty of the apostles was proverbial; they had no certain dwelling place, and sometimes wanted means to procure food and raiment. The man who was not a whit behind the chiefest among them, could not "keep sacred the holy ministry" from "professional pelf" but had occasionally to "locate" long enough to work with his own hands at the trade of tent-making to supply his bodily wants.

Who had the greatest possessions during his life time, Simon whose surname was Peter, or John, whose surname was Wesley? Have we any evidence in the New Testament that the former made any deed of settlement of chapels, preachers' houses, &c.? Perhaps the Jews were not as generous as the English.—But Mr. Wesley was a most liberal and disinterested man.—Be it so. On this point we make no question, Still however, did he not hold a title to more property, and exercise more power than any plebian subject in England! Now admitting that both were given to him, and in some instances almost forced upon him, and that he did not dare to renounce his title to the premises, any more than to part with his power, all we mean to infer is, that even under these circumstances he was not a poor man. When any one has a right and title to property, it makes him rich. Mr. Wesley was rich in church property, and he knew and felt that he was so. If he had been a poor man he would have felt differently, and others would have felt differently towards him. To say that he was not extravagant, or luxurious, not given to Nepotism, or the enriching of the children of his brothers and sisters; or that he was no miser, &c. is not to demonstrate that he was not rich, and did not feel like a rich man. Numbers of rich men have been free from those vices. Mr. Wesley was a man of like passions with us, and could it be proved that he was ever heard to say he felt like a man without property or power, we might question his word without impeaching his veracity. He might think he felt so, not knowing exactly how poor and dependent poor men feel; or might labor under some degree of misapprehension respecting his own feelings. Is it in the power of any man to sus-

tain or call back, the actual feelings of poverty and dependence when he becomes lord of thousands? Rich men, and men in power may, no doubt, be eminently good and pious, but not infallible. With the change of our circumstances our minds and feelings undergo changes, in a greater or less degree imperceptible to ourselves.

It is beyond all doubt, that the sovereigns of public property, as well as the possessors of private wealth, are differently affected. We only mean to say that both kinds of possessions are powerful exciters in the breasts of those who hold them; and the history of public men sufficiently attest the difficulty which the wisest and best have to encounter in keeping the excitement produced by the possession of public property and power within proper bounds. The history of Mr. Wesley and his own writings, afford irresistible evidence, that constitutionally considered he forms no exception to the general character of human nature. And to plead in his behalf the efficacy of grace, is to admit the fact; for if the feelings common to men in like circumstances were subdued by grace, or prudence, or any other countervailing means, they must have existed antecedently to the remedy. Many examples might be adduced, which are related and admired among his friends themselves to prove our position. One may suffice. Having lodged with a certain preacher on a Saturday night, they two went into the pulpit together on Sunday morning. Mr. Wesley at the close of the service, without consulting the preacher, announced an appointment for him in the evening. The preacher, repeating his words, said he would not preach there in the evening; to which Mr. Wesley immediately subjoined, that the preacher was no longer a member of his connexion. Without any apparent heat or agitation, they returned to the house, dined together, and parted for ever. Could any man who felt poor and dependent venture upon such a procedure? Here we see the spontaneous emotion of feelings, the origin and nature of which we cannot mistake or confound with others. High minded preachers of independent spirits, undrilled, and unbroken by power, will seldom fail to test the genuine feelings which belong to those who have entire control over church property. Mr. Wesley in this case did not in reality, partake of the hospitality of the preacher. The house, the table, were all Mr. Wesley's, as well as the chapel; and the preacher was employed only upon the condition of passive obedience. We are

aware, that the relation of father and son has usually been applied to these cases ; but should such relation be admitted, it would rather strengthen than invalidate the argument in favor of the existence of the feelings of mastery.

Let us now revert to the memorable instance of the community of goods in the primitive church. This property it seems was "laid at the apostles' feet," but they declined the trust ; and requested the brethren to look out among *themselves* men on whose fidelity they could rely as their trustees, stewards, or deacons. There is reason to believe, that they never did leave the word of God to serve these tables ; for had they done so, it is probable, that the Helenists would not have murmured that their widows were neglected. Look ye out, said they, among you seven men of honest report, and full of the Holy Ghost, whom we may appoint over this business. Was not this a favorable opportunity for the apostles to have used the argument so often resorted to among us ? The people came to them, brought the property to them, and gave them the power, &c. But, instead of availing themselves of any advantage of this kind, they neither used the power nor selected others to do it for them. This contrast is not at all favorable to our economy.

The consequences of exclusive proprietorship in public property in the Catholic church is well known, and has long been seriously deplored ; but it seems that we take no warning from the experience of others. We have fully set forth our determination to participate with our elder brethren in evangelizing the world. The General Conference, in their address, contemplate a meeting between the British Missionaries and ours, some where on the eastern coast of Asia or Japan. But when Methodism shall thus have encircled the globe, will any regard be paid by the missionaries, and their senders, to the mutual rights of the ministers and the people of the Methodist Episcopal church ? No such thing. These senior and junior brethren will divide the Methodist church property of the universe between them, without listening to any intimation, that the accumulation of so much wealth might seem to savor of monopoly or avarice, and might possibly be made to minister to ambition.

PART III.

We have said that Mr. Wesley was rich in church property; and that he knew and felt he was so. We say the same of our superintendents, they too know and feel that they have a hold on the public property, in virtue of the absolute prerogatives of their office, sufficiently firm to enable them to dispossess *any* preacher whenever they may think proper. It is to no purpose to say, they cannot convert this property to their own private use. There is no reason to suppose they would do so, if they had the title in fee. Kings are not wont to use the property of the crown for their own private benefit, or in other words, to impoverish themselves as kings, in order to enrich themselves as individuals. It is not to be supposed, that the holders of absolute power will be less ambitious than prodigal or covetous monarchs. The glory of superintendents is proportionate to the amount of property they have in their possession. Every house that is built, and every collection that is made, adds to their consequence, by increasing their influence. Poor bishops of rich diocesses, are not common; and poor universal bishops are much less so. The travelling preachers also, while their imaginations are dazzled with the idea of their share in the title of property, secured by deed to the General Conference, feel rich, and look down upon the poverty of local preachers; their exclusive right to seats in the conferences, is, indeed, so flattering to their vanity, as, in most instances, to blind them to the actual state of things. Few of them can be brought to reflect steadily upon the fact, that they are little more than trustees for the bishops, who, as soon as they are elected and inducted into office, are no longer responsible to them. The power or privilege of electing to an absolute office for life, is the most dangerous that can be vested in any body of men. The importance that such electors are prone to attach to themselves, is pleasantly ridiculed in the story of the cardinal and the pope. The cardinal, when he wanted a favor, reminded his holiness, that he made him pope; who, wearied at length with this importunity, replied, "then let me be pope."

The difference between Mr. Wesley's successors in England, and our superintendents, though so strangely confounded in conference addresses, is evident, and for all practical purposes, to our disadvantage. One hundred men

cannot act together executively, but must delegate one or more of their number. The British conference choose their presidents annually, and never the same man two years in succession. Now, when property is vested in one hundred out of a thousand, and the succession is to be kept up out of the remaining nine hundred, a year seldom elapses without some vacancy to be filled up; the chance, therefore, of success among the older preachers, will justify a reasonable degree of hope of participation. The age which might almost ensure a seat in the British conference, would amount to a disqualification for our episcopacy. An office divisible into so many parts, is not only diminished in duration in the same hands, but the temptation to abuse it can scarcely exist. We are not a little surprised to find in this exclusive polity, so great an approach to republican usage. Almost all fears of a system of favoritism, are dissipated by these annual elections; as the presidents themselves are subjected to the appointments of their successors; and the president, the chairman of districts, and members of conferences, as well as others, have common duties and common resources.

Our superintendents are not only chosen members of the conferences, and presidents for life, with the power of choosing the presiding elders, and stationing all the preachers; but to make them as independent as possible, they are pensioners on the book fund, to the full amount of all demands. The discipline, by putting no check upon their power, presumes they can do no wrong. In one point of comparison, it must be confessed, that the American itinerant preacher seems to have the advantage of the British; but another view of their condition will convince any one, that none of these seeming advantages can be realised. In England, travelling preachers who have fulfilled their probation, are eligible to the vacancies in the conference. With us, they become members of the annual conference, and eligible to a seat in the General Conference, and, of course, nominal proprietors of the church property. Here their glory ends. Innocence or neutrality gives no security to our preachers, to an equality of appointments. Every preacher, as well as the presiding elders, may become a minister to the episcopacy. Probationers may manifest greater zeal for the prerogative, than men of long standing and experience. Offences must needs come, and do often come, in despite of the greatest prudence. No travelling

preacher can protect himself against episcopal suspicion, or jealousy, or displeasure, and however unjustifiable a bishop's feelings may be, he may retain them through life; and perhaps transfuse them into the breasts of his colleagues. It is possible, indeed, that they cannot all be united in a proscription; but is it not infinitely more improbable, that fifty men will withhold their votes for a presidency, year after year, from every one who will not imbibe their prejudices. The chances, therefore, of being driven, or persecuted out of connexion in the two systems, bear no proportion. Though an hundred men may be as true to their common interests, as one or five, and a feeling of dependence must be engendered in both instances, yet it is of the utmost importance to weaken and conceal the feeling as much as possible.

It is a maxim with some, and every four years of experience serves to confirm them in it, that if a preacher is not prepared to go all lengths in episcopal measures, he will do well to decline an election to a seat in the General Conference. More than one travelling preacher might, perhaps, feelingly repeat in regard to Baltimore, with a member of the Synod of Dort. O Dort, Dort! O Baltimore, Baltimore! would to God I had never seen thee! The hero of opposition may return to his work, complacent in the consciousness of his own integrity, unawed by the fear of man; but the eye of episcopal vigilance is upon him. His health declines, the afflictions of his family, and cares and wants multiply upon him. He needs a house at hand, for he cannot move afar off; he wants medicine, and bread! To which of the saints will he now turn, to which of his friends say, pity me, O my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me! What! can *he* want a house, and a home, and the means of support, who inherits all houses, and property, to the exclusion of local preachers and the laity? Can a member of that General Conference, to whom so many thousands have been deeded, become a houseless wanderer, a pennyless stranger, among a strange people? Where now has the spirit of sympathy, and fellow feeling fled? O! where are his brethren, whose turn may come next! Is there no power in this heaven and earth to save him from the dread of starvation? None. How is this? Plainly thus. When all is given away, nothing remains. The General Conference have given the bishops a life power over that very property, which the donors vested in them-

selves. When they are made to know the worth of this property, by the want of it, at that very juncture they may be made to feel; that they can enjoy no part of it. And is there no remedy? Are bishops and presiding elders all past feeling? Perhaps there is one open door left; what executive purpose can be so inflexible as not to relent, when executive measures have converted a poor and needy opponent. Oh! we hope, that none of these elder brethren will refuse to join the music and dancing, when one who was lost is thus found!

We are not surprised to hear such unfeeling declaimers as Dr. Armistead, eulogizing all power, and confounding all distinctions among its holders; but when we see these very notions of identity, put forth in official addresses of British and American conferences to each other, we are both mortified and surprised. The truth is, that no body of men, in church or state, are subject to greater humiliation, or liable to become more abject under the frowns of power, than our travelling preachers. They are made to feel their dependence in every nerve, and to drink the cup of submission to the very dregs.

The show, the noise, the studied harangue, or the flattering address, fail to divert us from an examination of the inward springs and movements of matters. It is with the feelings we are concerned. Behold these three preachers; one is a bishop, the other an itinerant, and the third local. They all occasionally occupy the same preaching house. Have they all equal property in it? Does each know his own share in the premises? Does a knowledge of the difference of their claims to the title, produce no change in their feelings? Impossible. The proprietor feels differently from the tenant; and he who has neither deed nor lease, differently from them both. The last always feels poor, but the lord paramount alone feels securely rich. In what Methodist preaching house does a local preacher ever feel at home—feel the excitement, which a knowledge of right and title never fail to give? Well, the year has rolled round, the tenant, or the itinerant, is now all anxiety. Where shall he eat and drink, and his family be sheltered, and clothed, occupies all his thoughts, and fills his soul with a feeling of dependence. Itinerant preachers are sometimes heard to say, that local preachers are the happiest men in the world, because they can preach when and where they please, and are *not dependent* for a home and

bread. They mean by this, not so much to intimate their own state, as to chide local preachers for complaining of their privation of rights and privileges, &c. forgetting, or affecting to forget, that they are made dependent upon them for the conditions under which they are to exercise their ministry. We know how bishops feel, and how they must feel; how itinerants feel, and how local preachers feel. Equality and unison of feelings, ought never to have been intended nor expected by the organizers of the system; and if they actually were, the calculation was in vain, as no system could have been devised more effectually to destroy all unity of feeling. In a social system, as in the physical, it is only necessary to ascertain what kind of feelings will be generated, to be enabled to predict with almost unerring certainty, the practical results. Our bishops must be flattered, or their power must be resisted. But flattery is easier and more pleasant than resistance to operative power: Itinerant and local preachers and members of the church, therefore, will discover a proneness to flatter bishops. For the same reason, local preachers and members will feel disposed to flatter itinerant preachers. But can any reason be assigned, why the private members of the church should despise local preachers, or that they should manifest an indifference or aversion towards each other? Evidently, when the awe that the wealth and power of office inspires is longer felt, or ceases to operate under the disguise of flattery, the mind experiences a re-action, and seeks to revenge itself upon the name, or form of the office deprived of its attributes. Let the property and power which is really in our bishops, and nominally in the itinerant preachers, be transferred to the local preachers, and the public feelings will also be transferred. The flatterer pleases himself by his flattery, while he seeks to please those whom he flatters. And this pleasure proceeds from the relief which the mind experiences from the uneasy or painful sensation of fear. Mankind are sparing of their flattery towards those of whom they have nothing to hope, and from whom they have nothing to fear. The President of the United States is not flattered as a king; but would be, if his power was as much feared. We are aware, that an intimation, that our bishops and itinerant preachers are feared by the members and the local preachers, will be repelled with great indignation. Indeed, our whole theory of feeling in this case, will be considered as vision-

ary and erroneous. Our statement is nevertheless true, and admits of the clearest demonstration. Mr. Wesley was greatly flattered, and so was Mr. Asbury. They, indeed, mistook these expressions for the marks of love, and so did those who made them; but though it is not to be doubted, that there was much sincere affection, this was to the men. Their property and power were feared; and as was the fear, so was the flattery. Some of our bishops, we perceive, will be much flattered to the south and west of the Susquehanna, and much and deservedly loved too. But it does not now seem probable, that they will receive much eulogy from the north and east. If this shall prove to be the fact, will not the limits of their praise be the limits within which their power will be feared? We beg that these remarks may be attended to, and carefully kept in mind. These are the data, on which we have predicated the separation of the north and the east, from the south and the west. Where their power is not flattered it will be resisted. This is not an unwarranted assertion; it is not a new case; it is the thing that hath already been. Leaving Mr. Wesley's name out of the minutes, is a parallel instance, and may be traced to a similar cause. The absence of the man, disclosed the workings of the fear; had he been present, flattery would have concealed it all. Traces of a similar operation may be observed in Dr. Coke's visits. His power was not half so much to be dreaded as Mr. Asbury's; and yet the conference required articles to curb it, while he was in England. Of all the illusions which the human mind practises upon itself, none is more wonderful than that which takes place in the case of flattery. We always had occasion to notice, that Mr. Asbury placed his chief reliance for the ascendancy of his influence upon his presence. Where trouble was, there was he!

We think matters are hastening to a crisis; and that the times call for an exposure of this radical and fundamental error of our system. No good, as we can conceive, will come from a separation of men, or territory; unless the hold on property and power can be in some way equalized. The fear engendering principle must be purged out, notwithstanding all the wonders which flattery can perform, it will, in the end, be found, unable to supply the place of genuine love; but genuine social love is alone the offspring of mutual rights.

PART IV.

We come now to the influence of the power of our superintendents over property, in the election of their colleagues and successors. The number of our bishops is not limited nor restricted. An episcopal committee, so called, is appointed in the General Conference, who, in their report, commonly make some reference to strengthening the episcopacy, that is, whether there shall be one or more new bishops; for it seems to be taken for granted, that to increase the number is to strengthen the principle. The report in favor of adding one or more to the existing number of bishops being accepted, men are put in nomination by any one of the members, and balloted for; the highest on the list, having a majority of the whole, is declared to be duly elected, &c.

We do not recollect to have heard of any example parallel to this, either civil or ecclesiastical. Here the legislative power is exercised to make an indefinite number of supreme executive officers over the same territory or dominion; just as if the congress of the United States should increase the number of presidents. In Sparta, we are told of two kings; two consuls also were in Rome; but the senates or legislatures, exercised no prerogative over their number. Dioclesian, if we remember rightly, according to Gibbon, was the first who divided the imperial power, by making Maximin his colleague. One would have supposed, judging by analogy, that the first concern of constitutional makers would have been, to fix the number of universal bishops. In the Catholic church, one such bishop is supposed to be sufficient for the whole habitable globe; this being the contemplated extent of that church. No accession of territory, or increase of numbers ever gives rise in the Roman court, to any question about increasing the number of popes; nor is it ever in the power of a pope to gain a successor, by promoting the election of a colleague. The present manner of electing bishops among us, is believed to be altogether unprecedented in the history of elections. The Roman cardinals, though chosen by the popes, and so far furnishing a precedent for the choosing of our presiding elders by the bishops, are not called upon to elect a pope in the very presence of a pope; and should they be called upon so to do, we are not sure that they would be liable to be degraded from their "eminence," if their

choice were not found to accord with that of his "*holiness*." In all hierarchies except our own, (however strong may be the hope of promotion,) there seems to be little fear of degradation. The head of the church of England, if we rightly understand the polity, does not work upon the fears of the dignified clergy; does not take away offices, and give them to those who are more worthy, but, "promotes," and "translates," and "collates." Their clergy may ascend, but not descend. Even the *vicars* are not apt to lose their livings, when they fail to jump in judgment with their superiors.

If one or more of our bishops wants a successor, and can obtain influence enough through the presiding elders, to get a vote for strengthening the episcopacy, it must be an untoward circumstance indeed, which can prevent the election of his man. During the late electioneering campaign of four years, we were careful of our anticipations of the result, under a full persuasion, that be it as it might, data enough would be furnished to supersede all hypothesis. In truth, it would seem to have been in the highest degree presumptuous in us, to have predicated what report says actually did come to pass. A rumor has gone abroad, that a number of delegates, equal, as was supposed, to a majority of the General Conference, came with their votes pledged; and not satisfied thus to secure the election of one, they aimed to secure the election of two. Many reasons, and some of them plausible ones, might be adduced in favor of securing the choice of one; but when we consider how near equally the members were divided, and how unanimous they were in their sectional divisions; a determination to exclude every northern or eastern candidate or their friends, and thus subject half the connexion to take their appointments from competitors and rivals in a great and important measure, looks so much like a war of extermination, that we cannot conceal our astonishment. But this extreme anxiety to secure the election of particular men, must be referred to measures, and proves how much is to be feared from the unprecedented, and immense patronage of our bishops.

The favorite measure is the *veto*, or the negative of the annual conferences, upon the proceedings of the General Conference. To carry this point, the whole weight of episcopal or executive influence is made to bear upon it. And most unfortunately for the cause of impartial investigation, and the diffusion of information, the men in office seem to

confound opposition to principles, with disobedience to established rules. No sooner is a measure proposed, or adopted, than it is considered as criminal to examine its character, or point out its consequences. In nothing is the hierarchical spirit of our government more evident, than in this disposition to check free inquiry.

The negating or controlling power of the annual conferences over the acts of the General Conference, carries in it, in our estimation, as all *vetos* have ever done, the seeds and germs of ruin and desolation; but all arguments are silenced or turned against ourselves by this one reply, "you are enemies and opposers of the constitution." We are indeed, enemies and opposers of all *vetos*; and among them all, we can conceive of no one more dangerous than this. The effects of a veto are well known in the history of Rome and Poland; in both of which, it was productive of political ruin. The exercise of it in the Roman senate, was by the tribunes of the people, who, when any law was about to be passed, had only to rise and to say, *veto*, (I forbid it) and if the salvation of the state depended upon it, the united voice of the senate was in vain. Clodius the persecutor of Cicero, was one of these veto men, and Mark Antony another. Both were immortalised by the parts they acted in hastening, or completing the downfall of the Roman commonwealth. But it is in Poland, that we are to look for the full effects of this mischievous negative. In the Polish diet, any individual, however humble, had the power of calling for a division of the meeting, on any question; and one dissenting voice had the effect of rendering the whole deliberations ineffectual. This latter right, which was termed *liberum veto*, and which was repeatedly exercised, was the cause of the greatest calamities, and of much blood-shed; and in these modern times, within the period of our own memory, has conspired to accomplish the political downfall of that nation of fifteen millions of people. A little specimen of this negative sovereignty, was in contemplation among the handful of young preachers who composed the Mississippi conference in 1822, and which they were only persuaded to suspend for a time, by a bishop. Their actual doings were strongly portrayed in the General Conference, by Mr. Ostrander, in a speech, the admiration or terror of all who heard it. This handful of young men passed a resolution, implicating more than two thirds of the General Conference, in treacherously betraying the consti-

tution; and eulogizing a bishop for his fidelity, courage and zeal, in timely arresting these fatal measures, &c. We may be sure, that no resolutions, protests, or negatives, from the borders and out-skirts, will come against the bishops for usurpation of power. How can a bishop act unconstitutionally, unless he yield a portion of the prerogative?

Mr. Soule's election is identified with the veto; and but for this, we should feel no inclination to make any reference to it. His zeal for the cause, procured him executive patronage. And executive patronage, procured his election. As the bishop of the south and west, the writer of this essay, considers him as his bishop for life; confidently anticipating, as the least effect of his efforts, to obtain the test act, a north eastern and south western church. Already, therefore, in effect, we view Mr. George and Mr. Hedding, as bishops of a separate church; and the weight of Mr. Roberts and his increasing years, we presume, will cause him to gravitate to Indiana. We repeat, we consider Mr. Soule as our bishop for life. And as we shall continue, as we ever have done, to oppose by every lawful means, his favorite measure; we calculate on meeting from him, all kinds of direct and indirect opposition to mutual rights. For, betwixt these and the negative power of the annual conferences, in the manner and to the extent which he contemplates, there is an utter and irreconcilable opposition. But in this warfare of opinion, we trust, we shall not confound the man, the christian, or the preacher of the gospel, with a competitor in ecclesiastical and ministerial polity, we think, we know, what is due to offices and to their holders; and some experience gives us a degree of confidence, in our ability to resist the usual temptations to violate known duties.

Somewhere about the memorable 1776, (date not exactly recollected,) the few preachers who formed the conference in America, resolved "that Mr. Asbury," after hearing all that the preachers had to say for and against, the questions which were proposed, "should give the answers according to the minutes," That is, as we suppose, Mr. Wesley's general assistant, as well as himself, was not to take the vote of the preachers upon questions, (all matters were brought before the conferences in the form of questions) but to decide, after allowing the preachers to give their opinions. The legislative power was then assimilated to the judicial. Must not the advantages of this mode of

answering questions, have had a decided advantage over the round about way of securing an answer through the negative of an annual conference? How many annual conferences, will hear all that is said for and against questions? But if it be supposed, that the veto of the annual conferences, will be the mere echo of the bishop's opinion, why not keep to the old mode of answering according to the minutes?

We know not when the practice of voting first crept into the American conferences. Was it in 1784? It is probable it was then practised, as Mr. Asbury was elected by a vote of the conference, in Lovely lane; and we know of no evidence, that either he or Dr. Coke, gave the answer to the question, shall we become a Methodist Episcopal Church? Mr. Wesley had, in fact, determined this, and all the other questions; and sent his determinations over by Dr. Coke, little suspecting that they would become liable to a vote in the American conference. But however these matters might have been, the inconvenience of voting soon began to be felt; and to prompt the executive to put some check, or in some way to modify the consequences, the council plan, in our opinion, was, set on foot for this purpose. One of the ostensible reasons assigned for the council, was, the immense saving of time and expense, which would be occasioned by substituting it for a General Conference; and, certainly, if the annual conferences are to have a veto, upon all measures which superintendents may pronounce unconstitutional, they would save much. The council, the constitutional test, &c. are only coming round again to, "Brother Asbury's answering the questions according to the minutes." This legislating in General Conference by a majority of men, who have not a life office, in common, may be attended with alarming consequences to executive men. For, notwithstanding the hot fits of loyalty among the preachers—the patronage of property in the bishops—and the influence of presiding elders in the General Conference, long-sighted bishops now clearly perceive, that, unless they can go round the continent in quest of a *veto*, they may be found in a minority, and so lose their hold on the legislative reins; and with that, their control over the General Conference. We do really consider the constitutional test as a bishop's last resort. This defeated, and a steady pursuit of judicious measures, may lead to something like an independent legislation among Methodist preachers.

And we have no doubt, that if ever the executive and legislative power, can be in any measure separated, the rights of the members of the church, to a participation in the latter, will no longer be resisted.

We are conscious of the vast odds, at which we are engaged in this controversy; but we are equally conscious of its infinite importance. The present system embraces almost all the faults and vices of all hierarchies and monopolies of power, with very few of their benefits.

NICHOLAS SNETHEN.

Linganore.

No. 50.

Mutual Rights, vol. 1. March, 1825, page 294.

Remarks on the 15th of the Acts, and certain Articles of 'one of the Laity.'

No. 1.

"Certain men which came down from Judea, taught the brethren and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." That is, except ye become Jews, as well as Christians, ye cannot be saved. After this period, we find James in conversation with Paul, reminding him, that there were many thousands of Jews who believed, and who were all zealous of the law. They are called the sect or party of believing Pharisees. From this fact, and the declaration in the letter, "to whom we gave no such commandment," as well as from the almost unavoidable necessity of the case, it seems probable, that these men maintained their opposition to Paul and Barnabas, by pleading the authority and example of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. If these men had not *come from Judea*, would the case have been referred to Jerusalem? Or was this a case, to which Mosheim refers the deference paid to that mother church? All the apostles, upon the supposition of their inspiration, must have been agreed respecting the liberty of the Gentiles; and in this, it is probable, they were followed by the best informed, and most intelligent of the Jewish believers. But among the many thousands who were zealous of the law, there were, no doubt, not wanting those who pressed upon the Gentile converts the rite of circumcision, with all its legal conse-

quences. The "much disputing," mentioned in the seventh verse, seems to have been by these believers, who were zealous of the law, and not by the apostles and elders. But if so, they must have been present; and have had a right to speak. We cannot think, that all those elders at Jerusalem were preachers, much less, travelling preachers. Among the Jews there were elders by age, as well as by office. How many itinerant elders were stationed in Jerusalem, in company with how many apostles? Were there no deacons? The question at the meeting was, whether the Gentile converts should be circumcised or not; on this question, Paul's judgment as an inspired apostle was decisive, as is evident from his epistles, see Galatians, "I certify again," says he, "to every one that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law; Christ is become of none effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace." In favor of our opinion, that the brethren or members of the church were present, and had admission into these kinds of conferences, we produce also Galatians, ch. i. v. 4, see the whole paragraph. "And that because of false brethren, unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage." The verse is not so perspicuously translated as might be wished; the meaning seems to be, that they concealed their sentiments and designs; and not that they were personally hidden from view. It is remarkable, that this also was an affair of circumcision—that the attempt was made to compel Titus to be circumcised; but St. Paul says they would not submit, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you." The following are the very words of the historian St. Luke: "Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with *the whole church*." "And they wrote by them after this manner; The apostles, and elders, and brethren, greeting, unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia." Now, admitting that this historian did say, that "they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders," or, that he had said, apostles—or elders—or, that they were ordained, without mentioning the ordainers, in whole or in part, it would not have invalidated the letter, a copy of which he has preserved verbatim. The apostles, elders, and brethren, greeting—what business had the brethren to greet, or to say it seemed good unto *them*? Query,

might not Mosheim have quoted this text in favor of "*his ipse dixit*?" Now we shall take occasion to say, it seems to us, that in strictness of speech, or of principle, the elders had no more authority in this business than had the laity. If it seemed good unto the Holy Ghost, was not that enough? Observe how Paul, in writing to the churches, associates others with himself. "Paul and Timotheus and Sylvanus." Paul, and all the brethren that are with me. But we never hear of the Epistles of Sosithenes, and Timotheus, and Sylvanus. Admitting that our brother could prove the identity of those elders, and our travelling elders, how would he make out his conclusion, that the latter have a right to make laws or rules for the government of the church; and that the members of the church must be excluded from their legislative conferences? Would those primitive elders have had a right to form and change books of discipline, without the Holy Ghost, without the apostles, as well as without the brethren? This layman follows in the track of certain of the itinerants, and their zealous advocates, in assuming, that the elders of the New Testament and our itinerant elders are as much alike as peas; and that all the primitive preachers were travelling preachers. Let us put a case. Suppose a question was referred to Philadelphia, and the historian should say, that the elders came together to consider it, how would he exclude the local elders from the number? As our General Conference are supposed to be so entirely scriptural in all their doings, and as they make local elders, must we not suppose that the primitive authorities made local elders also? Perhaps there were local elders in Jerusalem who came together with the apostles, and joined with them to the exclusion of the laity, in ordaining the decrees for to keep. What would the laity say, if local preachers should reason thus—thus quote scripture instead of their "*ipse dixit*?" It seems to us, that the evidence is wanting of such universal and constant itinerancy, even among the apostles, as our writers commonly tell us of. Even our itinerant champions follow Dodwell, in making James bishop of Jerusalem, &c. Why not make ***** bishop of Philadelphia. Is it credible, that St. Paul labored more abundantly than all the eleven men who were constantly on horseback? Did he travel more than eleven times as much as they? We have all along employed this 15th of the Acts, in opposition to *this* resurrection of Popish principles

in our General Conference—this clanish monopoly of power—this image of a Hindoo cast—this stand by thyself, for we are holier than thou—this, O this! the hand trembles to write it, what is this! Ah, who can tell, who can comprehend, who can describe or foresee what it will be; what it is to come to, or where it will stop? It is all power over all flesh, in the church, and in the local ministry.

It seems that it rejoices this good man's heart, that the travelling preachers have the confidence of so great a number of the members of the church; but what has confidence in the men, to do with powers that alter not. There will not, probably, be a majority of those holy men who composed the General Conference in 1824, in the General Conference of 1828; and still less in 1832. Does he rejoice that the spirit of unchangeability and infallibility, will be with the successors of these itinerants to the end of the world?

Was not Mosheim right in saying, that the people were consulted? &c. Why, even the blessed and eternal spirit of truth, did not shut the church out of doors. The whole church was present with him, and he suffered the members to speak freely; and there was "much disputing" before he signified his mind, and when he had signified it, he allowed the whole church to express their consent, and to greet the brethren. "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and unto us—" To do what? Why, "to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things." And what are they? "That ye *abstain* from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication." Now, if these apostles and elders must still be considered as the authority, the rule and the model of our itinerant bishops and elders, (the church apart,) should not the imitators be strictly bound by the precedent? How many necessary things has it, does it, will it not seem good unto our apostles and elders to do *affirmatively*, as well as *negatively*? How many rules will they alter, and mend, and make, and bind upon us, by the pains and penalties of excommunication, without greeting us, or bidding us farewell? O this awful sovereignty without inspiration! this unbounded, this terrible power in hands that may change every four years; this omnipotence of legislation in new men, men of yesterday, whom we know not; this power to bind and to loose, to open and to shut, which can all be managed by a few men, or by one, through unheard of means of patronage

over legislators. What mind can contemplate it without terror and dismay!

Our lay brother considers himself an "unprejudiced man, not influenced by party feeling." We are sorry that he has given this opinion of himself; and the more so, as he seems to us not to understand the matter under the consideration of Cincinnatus. The obnoxious men, the authors of all the mischief, the local preachers, never appeared in print until 1821, which was months after all the events had taken place of which Cincinnatus speaks. Now, we should be glad to know, what the local preachers had to do with all the doings and undoings of May, 1820. What they had to do with the caucuses, and agitations, and suspensions, and constitutional tests of 1824. And what have they now to do with the formal, and distant, and ceremonious want of cordial feeling, which spreads itself through every grade and department of the itinerancy.

But his "wrong is wrong," is worthy of all acceptance. He has wronged the local preachers, but he has done it in ignorance. The true state of men and matters is this. The travelling preachers are almost equally divided, one part are contending with the other for their rights; the local preachers are contending for their rights; but not for theirs only, or to the exclusion of the rights of the travelling preachers or the members; and instead of arguments, "One of the Laity" offers reflections upon their motives and conduct, which ought not to have appeared in print, because they cannot be proved nor answered. It is astonishing that "One of the Laity" seems not to be apprised of the fact, that on page 229 he is verging on towards the very same ground, which in society involves interminable quarrels. How are such assertions answered? how can they be answered? Shall we descend to "you did, and I did not?" He should not have said, "to the cupidity of the locality; I mean their *unlawful longing* to regain power," &c. The locality can only deny what this writer says. It will be hard to keep the passions asleep, while the eye glances over such language as this: "I mean their *unlawful longing* to regain the power, which, in virtue of their being called by the Holy Ghost to act as ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ, they were once rightfully possessed of; and which they voluntarily resigned." Does this writer really believe that those of the locality to whom he alludes, are actually desirous to obtain power to make laws for the

church, without her consent? Matters between this brother and the locality, have come to a very unpleasant dilemma. Do those local preachers, who advocate mutual rights, still suppose, that travelling preachers, in virtue of their being called of the Holy Ghost to act in the capacity of ambassadors, are rightfully possessed of power to legislate for others without their consent? This is the very point at issue in the controversy. But waiving their opinions, this is the first time we ever heard of ambassadors being made *ex officio* legislators and governors. In the good old times of Paul, ambassadors for Christ used to pray men in Christ stead to be reconciled to God; and some local preachers do so still, believing that they are called of the Holy Ghost so to do. We will conclude with a quotation from an old instrument, which the English nation used formerly to profess a great reverence for, commonly called Magna Charta :

"Right will we sell to none, to none deny;
Nor right, nor justice will delay——"

NO. II.

In our first number we complained of "One of the Laity" for a charge against the locality, which admitted of no reply but a denial; and we are sorry to find other matters of the same nature, to which, as we do not feel ourselves bound to plead *not guilty*, we shall, as most becoming our self-respect, pass in silence. Our friends, Nehemiah and Amicus, we will leave to manage their own matters, in their own way; and begin with the following sentence. "I am constrained, 'fearlessly' to repeat, that if the account of the government of the primitive churches, given by St. Luke, ought to be preferred to that of Mosheim, then, and in that case, 'the Methodist ministers have the right to absolute government over those whom God has given them as the fruit of their labors.'" The word "*absolute*," transcends the original itself.* The travelling preachers, here called Methodist ministers, in contradistinction, we suppose, to local preachers, have only had claimed for them the right to govern; but it has not come to our knowledge, as yet, that any of them claim the right of *absolute* government.—This was not apparent to us in the late address, &c. If they do really make this claim, we hope, that on some convenient occasion, they will make it known officially, that we may demean himself accordingly. It nearly concerns those, in a special manner, who have been awakened and

* See Vindication of Methodist Episcopacy,

converted through their ministry to know it; for not a few of them, we are persuaded, remain ignorant of it to this day. The right to this absolute government, is predicated upon St. Luke's account of the government of the primitive churches. Is the word *churches* here in the plural an oversight? Or does the writer really believe that there were churches in the primitive times, subject to a supremacy, and a foreign jurisdiction? But where does he find St. Luke's account of the *government* of the primitive churches? We had, some how or other, taken up the idea, that the account or history of the primitive government, by an inspired writer, is wanting; and in this opinion we have found ourselves not alone. If he calls the passages he has quoted, an account of the government of the primitive churches; we think he will have to take his words back again, as being too strong. By his own account, the authority was "judicial," and the capacity "judicial." We quote his words at large; "They delivered them the DECREES OR LAWS, which the apostles and elders, those of them who it would seem, (though they were itinerants) resided chiefly at Jerusalem, had, by their judicial authority, or in their judicial capacity, enacted and ordained." Now we shall wait for this writer to tell us, whether in the primitive churches there was not only a foreign jurisdiction, and a sort of supremacy; but whether the legislative, executive, and judicial authorities and capacities were all jumbled or mixed together? Again, he says, "I beg that it may not be forgotten, that under *this form* of government, the churches were established in the faith, and increased in number daily, just as the societies in the Methodist Episcopal Church, (why did he not say Methodist Episcopal Churches) under their *present* form of government." A most extraordinary parallel surely. He calls the letter, which was written to the Gentile converts, "*this form of government*." Now, if they had had no other *laws* but these, would they not have come within one of being "without law?" It so happens that this decree (*dogmata*) which was ordained (*Kekrimena*) of the Apostles and elders presupposes the very principle of our common christianity, on which all churches are established. For if circumcision had been decreed, those churches would have been debtors to do the whole law; a yoke would have been imposed upon them, which neither ancient nor modern Jews were able to bear. It was a point of doctrine that was disputed; there is not a word, not a hint occurs

respecting government and discipline. St. Luke, like a good historian as he was, gives us a plain straight forward narration. He says, "they," the members of the church, "determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain others of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about the question," viz. "whether they should "be circumcised, after the manner of Moses, or not?" We repeat, the case is a plain and identical one. A point of doctrine was to be decided between Paul and Barnabas, on the one side, and certain men who came down from Judea, on the other; and the result was entirely favorable to Paul and Barnabas. The men on whom the chief reliance was probably placed by the supporters of circumcision, that is, Peter, sometimes called, the apostle of the circumcision, and James, delivered their sentiments on the occasion; and these speeches, in substance, the historian has recorded. Peter concludes by saying, "Why tempt ye God," &c. "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they." And James, thus, "My sentence is, that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God; but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day." So they took no vote, or made no decree in form, upon the point of circumcizing the Gentiles, thus admitting, that the doctrine was sufficiently established; and the Gentiles were free from the ceremonial law.

In regard to Acts, xvi. 4, 5, we will, as this writer says, make "a reference to the context." "Then," after James had concluded, "it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas, surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren. And they wrote by them after this manner: The apostles, and elders, and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles, in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia;" (were there no brethren of the Jews in these churches?) "Forasmuch as we have heard," &c. "it seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul," &c. "We have sent, therefore, Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same thing by word of mouth," &c. "So

when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch ; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle ; which when they had read, they rejoiced at the consolation. And Judas and Silas, being prophets," (not elders.) "And after they had tarried a space, were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles. And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God : and he went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches." "And as they went through the cities, they delivered the decrees (that is a copy of the letter) for to keep, which were ordained (determined on) of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem," &c.

By this reference, is it not "very evident" that "One of the Laity" has quite over-labored both text and context ; and drawn inferences from them unwarranted by either. We hope he will not again so "fearlessly" repeat them. But a word in regard to the hope of our brother. He is not, it seems, such a fool as to mean by the above declaration, that the Methodist ministers have the "right" to control or overrule the civil laws of our free and happy country. Well now this is mighty patriotic, we will not suppose him to be a fool any how ; but is it not somewhat improper and unbecoming in him, to be making such suppositions, how those who have an absolute government over him may extend their right, or for-what purposes they may, or may not, use him as an instrument.

This "One of the Laity" is not mealy mouthed, he don't mince matters, he seems, as a politician, more honest than long headed. "Generally speaking," he says, "the people care little how the church is governed, so that they are secured in a regular supply of spiritual preachers." If this supply should fail, what would they do then ? Would they begin to care a little how the church is governed ? Cares, like repentance, sometimes come too late. Had he said, the people care little how the country is governed, would his fellow citizens have thanked him for the compliment ? Truly, if the people care not how the church is governed, their governors will, in process of time, care little how they govern them. This indifference is one of the awful, and undoubted evidences of the effects of an absolute government. We have long known and deplored "the fact," that the idea of being secured in a regular supply of spiritual preachers, has operated among us as a strange delusion. What is more idle and visionary, than to talk about security

for any thing under an absolute government. Can a greater insult be offered to such a government, than to ask security of it? This was all the reformers petitioned the General Conference for; and it is now all that the friends of mutual rights require. And how have these essays, and petitions and addresses, and arguments been met? How have their authors been treated? Let any one, who can keep his feelings cool enough, to finish reading the essays of "One of the Laity," answer. A man after consigning body and soul to the absolute government of Methodist ministers, can yet talk of "such as had by locating lost their right in the law-making department of the church."

We cannot help regarding it as a remarkable circumstance, that letters in our possession, from the itinerant department, not only contain, in substance, the remarks of this writer upon the hypocrisy and treacherous ambition of local preachers, but they are almost word for word. Have these opinions passed in the usual way from one to many, or do they rise spontaneously from a correspondence of views and feelings. We once inclined to believe the former, but we have now some doubts whether the latter cause may not have considerable influence also; but be this as it may, there is such a circumstantial agreement in these altercations and recriminations, and the old whig and tory controversy, that it seems worth while to bestow some thoughts upon the subjects. From many cases, which we can recollect, we are well persuaded, that the tories, as they were called, were not, in the usual acceptation of the term, enemies of their country, or friends to tyranny. In what then did they differ from the whigs? Why, in their unbounded confidence in their rulers. True, said they, we may be taxed without our consent; but we ought to help to bear the expenses of the mother country; the parliament will never tax us unreasonably. The whigs, on the contrary, looked steadily at the principle; if the parliament, said they, assume the right, or the power, to take a penny, without our consent, they may take a pound; and if one pound, all our property. How was this last argument resisted? We now look back, with wonder, upon the blind and obstinate attachment of our countrymen to the then existing powers. But there was another cause operating on their minds, while their confidence was strong in the goodness of the king and parliament; their partizans took care to influence their feelings against the asserters of prin-

ciple. You have, said they, more to fear from these revolutionists, than from the established government, which will not take more than is necessary. It was by this means, that principle was lost sight of, and passion and prejudice were raised to the highest degree. Why is it, that our brother cannot feel the force of his own maxim, "wrong is wrong." Absolute government is wrong in principle, and confidence in it is wrong. All these worthy itinerants are creatures of a day. Men are given to change; but principles are immortal. The principles of these obnoxious travelling and local preachers, and the brethren with whom they act, are right. They say, and they say truly, that the best of men ought not to be trusted with unnecessary powers and prerogatives. We are grieved to think, that our brother could find it in his heart, to lend the aid of his, otherwise correct, pen, to give currency and strength to one of the most mischievous of all prejudices; prejudice against true principles, because the men who propagate them may be found, in the end, not true to them. But we hope that he has furnished to himself and his friends, a caveat, and a corrective in that awful, and indeed, horrible word "*absolute*." Will he not be terrified at it, when reflected back, in all its shocking forms and colors? Absolute government! What demon, should one appear in America, would create greater alarm—the *absolute government of the Methodist travelling ministers*! Will not the sound make the very blood run cold in the veins of our governors, and the hair of their heads stand on end. What! will not one and another of them say, does our friend, our admirer, our eulogist, call *our* government, over *our* dear children in the faith—those whom *we* have begotten, through the gospel, to a lively hope—the Lord's free men, "*ABSOLUTE*!" We shrink from the title. Does *he* suppose, that the gospel makes *us* like the Grand Turk! No, they will say, thou good but mistaken brother, "*we* were gentle among them, even as a nurse cherisheth her children."

No. III.

The contempt which "One of the Laity" has cast upon the understandings, and integrity of the Methodists, we shall let pass. If they are really of the opinion, that they cannot be safely trusted with any portion of self-government, be it so. The travelling preachers, however, have

taken special care not to put their talents, or their inclination to the test. How many of the brethren have made a benefit of necessity, we know not; but, we think, we may safely indulge in the belief, that if half the pains had been taken, to teach the laity the right of representation, that has been, to persuade them to be contented with the privilege of having travelling preachers to make rules or laws for them without representation, a respectable number would have been found somewhat apt to learn. It is well known, what immense labor and difficulty it cost Mr. Asbury to maintain the non-representative system. The effects of his tenacity for the British regime, are still evident in more than one place. The genius of the great body of the people to whom we have access, is so decidedly republican, that we are well persuaded, if the travelling preachers had boldly averred in the pulpit, the sentiments contained in this brother's essays, the number of their proselytes would have been small. It was the show, the appearance of religious liberty, connected with the itinerancy, in most new places, which attracted public attention. The bold and fearless manner in which the lacings of the old establishment were cut—the liberty of prophecyng—of praying extempore, and the like, won upon the feelings and attention of a people, who were in the habit of walking at large beyond the watchful eye of power. The first Methodist preachers did often speak against spiritual tyranny, in the middle and southern states where they labored. And when they passed into the eastern states, they found religious establishments had there survived the revolution. Money and power—avarice and ambition in the clergy of those establishments, was a welcome theme to many in the pulpit, and out of it. The newness of every thing in the west, was equivalent to liberty; thus, in reality, until within these few years, with the exceptions alluded to, the travelling preachers have been supposed to be relatively favorable to liberty. And this relative character in the public opinion, has proved one great cause of their popularity and success. It would indeed be bringing strange things to the ears of our congregations, to proclaim the declarations of "One of the Laity," in our pulpits, against representation. Our itinerants have prudently forborne to proclaim upon the house-tops, their right to *absolute government*; but, if they whisper such things in the closet, let them not be surprised to hear others do it for them in public.

Now, the friends of mutual rights may be few, and the great body of the Methodists may believe, that their exclusion from the law-making department may be, as one speaks, the securing of the privileges of thousands; and yet, the principle of representation may be the true one; and nine-tenths of the citizens of the United States believe it to be so. Things may settle down into this relative state, and if they do, the result will prove very different from the relation already described. When all the people in this great commonwealth, shall view in every travelling preacher an opposer of representation in church legislation; and an asserter of right to *absolute* government over their own converts, who will be converted by them? Let men be taught to believe, that to join the Methodist Episcopal Church, is the same as to subject themselves to itinerant domination, and will the church increase annually by thousands, or by tens?

But hark! says "One of the Laity," surely I have touched a discordant string. We tell you, brother, you have touched a string that will vibrate harsh thunder, unless you can untune it, or snap it in two—depend upon it, people will not bear to hear of *absolute* government in this free country; and least of all, will they bear to hear that it is scriptural? O no! they have not so learned Christ. The sons of Columbia have not been so catechised. All the good people of these United States, except the disciples or advocates of certain travelling preachers, think of representation whenever they think of legislation. A word before we conclude, upon *Dogmata*, and *Kekrimena*, translated, decree, and ordained. It is well known to lexicographers, that in a number of instances in the writings of the ancients, they admit and even require a free translation. *Dogmata* is derived from *doko*, I think; and *kekrimena*, from *krino*, to judge, discern, determine. We are persuaded that the words do not imply, that the apostles and elders, considered themselves as a legislative body, or meant to act legislatively; but as arbitrators, or referees; for the *dogmata* was sent, not to the Jewish, but to the Gentile converts; not every where, but to Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia. Now, our elders do not ordain laws for particular persons and places, nor do the elders in one place compose a general or legislative conference. "My sentence is," says James, "that we trouble them not, which, from among the Gentiles, are turned unto God."

If "One of the Laity," is not convinced by our arguments, that his premises will not bear him out in his inference, we will take it kind, if he will give us his thoughts upon "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church," &c.

A FRIEND TO MUTUAL RIGHTS.

No. 51.

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AN ESSAY ON 2 TIM. 1 CH. 7 V.

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind."

Some philogers suppose that *Declia*, from the root of *Delios* translated in the text by the word *fear*, the words *die* and *dead* are derived. And we know from experience, that fear can come from, and produce weakness. "God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power;" that is courage. We associate weakness with fear, and strength with courage. In children, the body and mind are weak. In adults, child-like weakness of mind, or ignorance, may exist, while the body is healthy and vigorous. But in all cases, we shall find some kind or degree of weakness, wherever we find fear. The spirit of fear, that is, fear itself, may be said to be *given*, in the same sense that the effect is said to be given with the cause; or the consequence with its precedent. To believers, the gospel does not give causes or precedents which necessarily produce fear, or are inevitably followed by it. The gospel does not enfeeble either the body or the mind. A spirit of fear, may be given, or superinduced, by a system of education or government.

Entire ignorance upon any subject excludes all fear pertaining to that particular subject; hence the maxim, "they that know nothing fear nothing." It is partial ignorance, or imperfect knowledge, that makes us cowards. This is true in regard to superstition. The kind and degree of knowledge, imparted and imbibed, produce alarm and terror. It may so happen, also, in the afflicting events, which befall us in the order of Providence. These kinds of terrors, as Job calls them, "the terrors of God make me afraid." He could not comprehend the principle of them, nor foresee their issue. The knowledge which the gospel imparts, in-

spires confidence and hope, not doubt and despair. But there is a fear of authority, as well as a fear of ignorance or limited and partial knowledge, from which the gospel relieves us. These two kinds of fear, however they may have been associated or confounded, are distinct from each other in their origin, and in their nature. An infidel or an atheist, who has no belief in the being of God, no kind of religious fear, may, nevertheless, be a personal, or a political slave; and tremble before the power of man. And inversely, the subjects of the freest governments may be educated in systems of dark and desperate superstition. A fear of priests and of kings, or of ecclesiastical and civil authority, has then no necessary connection with theological or religious knowledge, properly so called. And though priest-craft, and king-craft, or power, are commonly united under the titles of church and state, they may exist independently of each other. But, inasmuch as a "Divine right" is the best of all rights, when men, under the gospel, seek for a right of control or absolute authority over their fellow men, they will, of course, be led to rest their claims upon the gospel itself.

It behooves us, therefore, by the most careful and critical examination, to ascertain whether God has or has not given us the spirit of fear to religious superiors or masters. For the consequence is unavoidable, if the ministers of religion are made absolute, and not responsible governors, a spirit of fear is given to the church;—for the former must needs engender the latter. There can be no error in the proposition. When all is given, nothing remains;—or when nothing remains, there can be no farther division. If all ecclesiastical power be vested in the ministers of religion, they are the heads, the sovereigns of the church; and the church has no power at all. Again, if all ecclesiastical power be vested in one of the ministers of religion, none remains to be divided among the rest; and one will be the head and sovereign of the church, and of the ministers too.

The points in particular to be inquired into, seem to be these: how did Jesus Christ teach his apostles—and how did they understand his instructions? Did he teach them the principles of a hierarchy—and did they reduce these principles to practice? To answer the first of these inquiries, we must needs have recourse to the gospels. One of the relations which obtained between our Saviour and his disciples, was that of teacher and scholars. He reminded

them, again and again, of the necessity of learning of him, as little children. Their former knowledge was, in no case, to prejudice their minds or their dispositions. On the supposition, that all the powers and prerogatives of the ancient priesthood were to be transferred to them, no satisfactory reason can be assigned, why they were required to be so docile to their new teacher.

But let us hear the master speak—"Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great, exercise authority among them; but it shall not be so among you. Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto; but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many."—Matth. xx. 25-28. "But do ye not after their works, for they say and do not, for they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne—but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers—and love to be called of men, *Rabbi, Rabbi!* But be ye not called Rabbi, for one is your master, even Christ, and ye are all brethren. And neither call any man father upon the earth, for one is your father, which is in heaven; neither be ye called master, for one is your master, even Christ; but he that is greatest among you, shall be your servant."—Mat. xxiii. 3-12. "They were disputing among themselves, who should be greatest; and he saith unto them, if a man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all."—Mark ix. 34-36. "And he saith unto them, the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them, are called *benefactors*—but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."—Luke xxii. 25-26.

On some of the medals of the ancient kings of Syria, besides the portraits of the kings themselves, we have on the reverse, an archer, sitting on a throne, holding out his bow, with the mottos—"king of kings;" "*benefactor*;" "just;" "illustrious;" "great king." Now it is somewhat remarkable, that our Lord should have selected from among these titles "*benefactor*"—*euergetes*. Has this term any relation to the Hebrew? (shadi.) Did the assumption of it convey an idea of obligation on the part of the governed? As, for instance, "this right to govern is in us." "We do you a favor, in condescending to govern you." Then said our Lord, "Ye shall not be called benefactors"—doers of favors

—conferers of benefits—any more than masters or fathers. Observe how these titles are calculated to inspire fear. They would not only be feared as masters, (Kathegetai,) *Duces viæ*, leaders of the way, institutors, or Hodegoi, preceptors; but as euergetai, as it were, gods. What calamities were not to be dreaded, if the benefactors were displeased, and should refuse to govern!—or if their government should be usurped! Although our Lord says, expressly, it shall not be so among you; yet, is it not most commonly so, among hierarchical ministers? Is it an unusual thing, to hear dignified ecclesiastics, in a style somewhat peevish, broadly intimating, that they are conferring favors on ungrateful, if not unworthy subjects? This feeling is manifest in not a few of the writings of their defenders and panygerists. What a favor!—what a benefit, that such an one should condescend to exercise authority over us! All this would be true, upon the supposition that the church has no right except that of being governed. Is this meaning included in the phrase “securing the rights of thousands”—that is, governing them!

We see, then, what our Lord taught his disciples to do, and what he forbid them to do. If there was no equality in all this, in what language can it be conveyed? “*All ye are brethren*”—“one is your master, even Christ”—your *dux viæ*, leader of the way. We may not, however, trust our own judgment, but inquire how the apostles themselves understood these instructions. And, first, let us hear Peter upon this point: “The elders which are among you, I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory which shall be revealed; feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but as examples to the flock.”—i. Pet. v. 1, 2, 3. This *Katakuriëuontes tôn klerôn*, lording it over the heritage, is an echo, as will be perceived, by the texts already quoted out of the gospels. Three things seem here to be guarded against: 1. Indolence. 2. Avarice. 3. Ambition. The last, in particular, was incompatible with the *setting of an example* to the flock, as appears from the 5th verse—“Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.” Next let us hear James; “My brethren, be not many masters.” “My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with

respect of persons." The rebuke of John to Diotrephes, is well known. In what did this man's offence consist? He loved to have the *preeminence*; and his conduct corresponded to his disposition. We need only quote St. Paul. "Not," says he, "that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy." All this is quite to the purpose. Can any countervailing passage be found in the New Testament? The whole meaning seems to us to be well expressed in "God hath not given us the spirit of fear"—not given us a hierarchy, or government of preachers, to act over us with an uncontrolled dominion.

No intimation, is any where given, that one or more of these twelve apostles, should have dominion over the others; and, of course, be feared by them. The passage in John, on which certain hierarchists lay so much stress, viz. "Feed my sheep," "Feed my lambs," is not *rule, govern, command*. Nor were these sheep and lambs brother shepherds; that is, apostles. And as for the saying, "on this rock will I build my church," it is clearly explained by the passage which speaks of the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself, being the chief corner stone. Paul did not fear Peter, for God had not given to St. Peter the supremacy over the rest of the apostles. Hence Paul withstood him to his face. The very circumstance, of the equality of the twelve apostles, ought to put all controversy at rest, respecting the existence of a primitive hierarchy. These men were not only all equal among themselves, as witnesses of the resurrection, but as planters of churches, and doctrinal teachers; and whatever may have been their governing powers, these also they held in common, and not one over another. It is no uncommon thing, for episcopal writers to talk about him who presided, when the apostles met. Some of them suppose, that James presided at Jerusalem, &c. Was James then the senior bishop, or the arch-bishop, or the patriarch, or the pope? How did he get into the chair? Did he take it of right, or was he elected? In a certain conference, James, and Cephas, and John, seemed to be pillars. But it made no matter to Paul. And indeed they gave him the right hand of apostolical fellowship. Paul, as the apostle of the Gentiles, magnified his office; that is, maintained his equality. Can any thing be more plain, than that twelve men could not act executively, or manage an individual sovereignty, as the head of the church, upon hierarchical principles? And is it not equally plain,

that our Saviour did not depute any one of them directly and by name to this office? And that they did not do it indirectly among themselves? "When," says Paul, "they saw, that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to me, as of the circumcision unto Peter, for he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles. And when James, Cephas, (Peter,) and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision." And yet this very Peter is made to be the exclusive head of the church. Verily! he must have obtained this commission after this conference. For neither he, nor James, nor John, nor Paul, nor Barnabas, nor any body else, had any knowledge of it then. He was to go, continue to go unto the circumcision, not alone, but in company. *They unto the uncircumcision.* Paul never contended for precedence, but equality. "I am not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles." This was not boasting. It was not usurpation. For there was no hierarchy in this fraternity. Peter was to be blamed, because he refused to eat with the Gentiles. It was well for the church, on this occasion, that he was not pope, head of the church. For this practice could not have been withstood. But as they were all brethren, authority could not get the better of reason. The paroxysm, which led to the separation of Paul and Barnabas, might be quoted as another example, of the liberty and equality which reigned in this primitive family of gospel ministers. But no where in the New Testament, is the absence of the hierarchical principle more manifest, than in the epistles to Timothy and to Titus. Epistles so often quoted, and indeed, so constantly relied upon by all parties. We should bear in mind, that these men are called sons; and that their title of office is evangelists. But with the single exception of bearing witness to the resurrection, and writing scripture, their powers seem to be almost as plenary as those of the apostles themselves. Not one word, not even an allusion occurs, in these interesting letters, to any thing like a supremacy. And this is the more remarkable, as in after times, pastoral letters abounded in this kind of matter. The writer of the book of Revelation, is also equally silent respecting this modern rock of the church's salvation. The last, the dying letter of St. Paul, and the revelation which

Jesus Christ shewed unto his servant John, say not one word about the supremacy of Simon, whose surname was Peter; nor precedency and succession apostolic; though, taking all things into consideration, these seem to have been fair occasions. If we admit the existence of Peter's preeminence, how can Timothy and Titus be justified in taking their instructions from Paul, and executing their ministry in the church, without any reference to the vicegerent of Jesus Christ upon earth?

Let any man make himself acquainted with the apparatus of those civil and religious governments, under which the spirit of fear prevails, and having carefully read over the New Testament, let him ask himself, if he finds any of those fear inspiring agents and instruments there. It has been well said, that the dominion of man over man, is founded in opinion, not in nature. And the most superficial observation of artificial governments, must convince any one, of this. To produce military subordination, how much discipline, and how many means are necessary. But military discipline itself, is not sufficient for the purposes of civil government. In order to give this its effect, children must be educated from the cradle, and all the pageantry of courts be displayed. Instead of these, the gospel exhibits a pure example of the government of principle. The few insulated passages, which have been tortured, in order to make them speak in terms conformable to a government of men, instead of principle, if left alone, without the super-addition of abundance of human legislation, would be found to be utterly inadequate to this end. This is the reason why all hierarchists plead so strenuously, in behalf of their own enactments, as of equal authority with the scripture. If as much fear as commonly operates in monarchical governments, had been necessary to the apostolic government, its authority could not have been maintained for a day. Hence our Saviour said, it shall not be so among you. As an instance, we need only quote the case of the two sons of Zebedee and their mother, when they made application for the first honors; "When the ten heard it," says the evangelist, "they had indignation." If it had been really the intention of the master, to have made any one or more of the disciples supreme over the rest, what teaching and caution, and warning, and even threatening, would have been necessary! But instead of this, he checks their first aspirations, and reminds them, that they are all brethren. It may

be no difficult matter, to find men to take the sovereignty, under a new system; but not so easy to produce the spirit of obedience. Our Saviour had endeared himself unto the eleven. The time when he was about to be taken from them, would have been the most fit to fix upon a successor, if he meant to leave one. Yet not one of them is named. "I go away, but I will send you another comforter, even the spirit of truth, who shall abide with you for ever. Now, I go my way, to him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, whither goest thou? But because I have said these things, sorrow hath filled your hearts; nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you, that I go away; for if I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him to you." The same leading object is kept in view, respecting the pentecost. Instead of pointing out a successor, and training the rest to habits of subordination to his authority, he directs them to tarry at Jerusalem, until they should be endued with power from on high. When the day of pentecost was fully come, they were all together in one place, with one accord, and they were *all* filled with the Holy Ghost. No two systems can be more distinct, than this is from an hierarchy. When the Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, he sent the comforter, the spirit of truth, to supply the place of his personal presence; but left no one of his disciples to occupy his place, and to govern the rest. All his offices are perpetual and unchangeable, and, of course, cannot be held or represented in this world, by a succession of mortal men.

To keep up a succession of human heads over the church, a spirit of fear must be kept up in the church. Why these names, these titles, these offices, these powers and prerogatives? Not surely to inspire love, but fear. 'His Holiness,' 'His Eminence,' 'The most reverend father in God,' 'The right reverend,' and 'His grace the Lord Bishop,' &c. &c., are calculated to fill the mind with awe; and appearances are made to correspond to the sounds, to make the effect more complete. The tripple crown, the pontifical robes, the splendor and the show produce their full measure to this illusion. And if any one has temerity enough to touch the tinsel, he will find beneath this gaudy covering, offensive and defensive armor, in quantity and kind, sufficient to convince him that it is not with phantoms that he has to do. An hierarchy gives us the spirit of fear, for it is really a most fearful power. It carries terror and consternation to the

very heart. Our Saviour's precepts and examples correspond, in proving, that he did not mean to raise up a spirit of mastery in the ministry. He not only assures them, that he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister: He also tells them, that henceforth he will not call them servants; and his reason for doing so. A servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends. For all things that I have heard of my father, I have made known unto you. Add to this, the new commandment—A new commandment I give unto you, that ye should love one another. Not that one should fear another. "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love, and of a sound mind."

PART II.

St. Paul, says expressly, that God has not given us the spirit of fear; and in this the enemies and opposers of the gospel, are at issue with him. They say that he has given us the spirit of fear. If they could prove, that the gospel establishes and perpetuates a spirit of servility in the hearts of its believers, it would amount to a most formidable objection indeed. The well known fact, that our Lord chose twelve apostles, has already been noticed; and some pains have been taken, to shew, that they felt and acted towards each other, as equals, without fear or submission. Now it is worthy of remark, that hierarchists, in order to make out a primitive model, have found it necessary to assume and to attempt to prove, that one of these apostles was appointed by the Lord himself, to be their head and chief; and that he and his successors were intended to be the fountain of all ministerial and ecclesiastical power, to the end of time. It has been argued, that Peter became possessed of this supremacy, together with the keys and the surname, rock. His first and proper name was Simon; Simion. Blessed art thou Simon, son of Jonas;—literally hearer, or listener;—son of Dove. For flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my father who is in heaven; and I say unto thee, thou art (surnamed) Petros, (rock,) and upon this rock (surname) will I build my church; not give thee perpetual precedence over thy brethren; nor to thy particular successors, a supremacy in power over all ministers. I will build my church upon this answer of thine, from which thou art surnamed. That this was the meaning which the sacred writers affixed to the words "thou art

Peter," admits of no dispute, as we have their own express word for it. "Simon, called Peter; Matt. iv. 18. Simon, he surnamed Peter; Mark iii. 16. He chose Simon whom he also named Peter; Luke vi. 14. Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon son of Jonas; John xxi. 15. Send to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter; Acts x. 5." &c. The nature of Simon was not changed into a rock. His name itself was not changed. But another name was added to it; and that was a name of truth and not of office. What did Simon do to obtain this name? He answered our Lord's question, "but whom do ye say that I am?" by saying "thou art Christ, the son of the living God." This was a truth, not a government, or authority to govern. And on this rock, (truth,) rock-like truth, foundation, foundation-truth, will I build my church. The church is built upon a foundation, not upon the power of its ministers. The foundation of God standeth sure; the Lord knoweth them that are his; and let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity. The same truth was revealed to all the apostles; not by flesh and blood, but by the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence the church, composed of Gentiles as well as Jews, is said to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself, being the chief corner stone. So also in the Revelations; "And the walls of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

To say, that the gates of hell should not prevail against the church, because Peter was pope, seems to us, to be quite a distinct thing, from saying that they should not prevail, because it was built on Peter's answer, which could have no manner of connection with any thing else; but the question, "Whom do men say that I am?" Not "Whom do men say shall govern the church; be its head upon earth, or its chief minister?" How strange, that men should associate the idea of a rock, or a foundation with the government, or the administration of the government of the church! Can two things be more distinct in nature or in name? Taking the idea of the head of the church in its most enlarged acceptation, as applied to the sovereign pontiff or pope, it differs essentially from the foundation. Catholics, themselves, are not taught to say, I believe in the pope, in the same sense that they are to say, I believe in Jesus Christ. No doctor will teach the people in the

same acception, as Paul did the jailer. Believe in the pope, and thou shalt be saved. It is much to be regretted, that not a few of the Protestants, and of the denominations which have sprung from the Protestants, have shewn so great a propensity, to make the power of ministers of the gospel to govern the church, that is, legislate its laws, as well as execute them, a foundation-truth. The loosing and binding power was not given exclusively to Peter, as is evident from John xx. 22, 23. "He breathed on them, and saith, receive the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." We have no evidence in the New Testament, that either Peter or any of the apostles, understood our Lord to mean any thing essentially different from writing and preaching the gospel. They proclaimed and offered the pardon of sin and all spiritual benefits, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and threatened unbelievers with final condemnation.

On the subject of the keys, we cannot do better than to quote Dr. G. Campbell. "But as Peter's zeal had led him to be as it were, the mouth, in making this profession to his master, Christ, after the effusion of the Spirit, he honored him to be their mouth also, in first preaching this doctrine and giving testimony for him to the Jews, and afterward by the special call of God, to the Gentiles. It is thus, the apostle himself speaks of it:—'Brethren, ye know how that God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth, should hear the word of the Gospel.' This is called, in another place, 'opening the door of faith to the Gentiles; and affords a natural exposition of Christ's declaration to Peter, I give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Yet even here, there is nothing peculiar given to Peter; but merely that he should be honored, to be the first in the conversion of the Gentiles. Afterwards, Paul was incomparably more eminent than he." As Peter was the first to preach the gospel to Jews and Gentiles, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and the door of repentance and faith was thus opened and has not been since shut, and never will be again shut, until the final judgment, these keys can be of no farther use in the hands of Peter's supposed successors. He opened that kingdom of God, or of heaven, which was at hand. Those who were present with him at the house of Cornelius, though they were Jews, acknowledged, that upon the Gentiles also,

was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. And those who heard Peter relate the facts, glorified God, that to the Gentiles he had granted repentance unto life.

Certainly, Peter was greatly honored at the Pentecost, and on this occasion. But though the angel directed Cornelius to send for him, to tell him words whereby he should be saved, yet he and his brethren were contented, that he should be chiefly distinguished as the apostle of the circumcision.

After all the passages which have been referred to, in support of St. Peter's supremacy have been collected, let them be compared or rather contrasted with the claims of Judah, to the precedency among the sons of Jacob. In the case of Judah, every thing was express and literal. In the case of Peter, all is implied or inferred. The pre-eminence of Judah was acknowledged of all. Peter was always treated like a brother, and an equal, and he aspired to no higher distinction. Peter indeed, as we have seen, said and did some things, first, in the order of time. But he said and did nothing exclusively, or in virtue of a special office. Paul labored more abundantly than they all. Now will not those who practice upon the principle of ministerial supremacy, and yet argue, that God did not give the apostles, and primitive ministers, a spirit of fear, render themselves liable to be condemned out of their own mouths? Why so much fear and jealousy on their part, lest their power may be checked and controlled? Why so many means and measures to make their power known, to make the spirit of fear the ruling influence, in the hearts of those they govern? Why this ascending and descending scale of offices? And why the immeasurable distance between the higher and lower stations? There is no other way to vindicate the gospel against the charge of producing a servile spirit, except by admitting the equality of the apostles in office; and of course, that those who have taken to themselves the title of their successors, have departed from the scriptural example.

A spirit of servile fear, is nearly allied to that fear of man, which bringeth a snare; and while it debilitates the understanding, renders the feelings more or less ignoble. How degrading to human nature, is the progress to office and power, through fawning and flattery, and the haughty airs each of these flatterers in turn assumes, when he gains the object of his pursuit? If it shall be assumed as possible,

that a ministerial government can be perpetuated, without generating a spirit of fear, the fact might be opposed to this assumption, that there is in the hearts of all men, a natural love of liberty, which must be extinguished by a servile course of education, or overawed and broken down by the terrors of power. Even among those who have been long schooled to non-resistance and passive obedience, a proneness to self-control, will occasionally manifest itself. The history of all hierarchies proves, that education alone is seldom trusted to. Among those who through successive generations, have been taught to view the ministers of religion as being to them in God's stead, all the functionaries of power are kept in constant exercise; no old laws grow obsolete, and none of their forms fall into disuse. The sword is never suffered to grow rusty in the scabbard, or the shield to lose its lustre. All the pageantry of power, all its glittering ensigns, are displayed to dazzle, to allure, or to confound. The final object is, not to produce rational liberty, not to form men to habits of subordination to a government of laws, instead of passions, but to cause every knee to bow, in absolute submission, and every tongue to confess, implicit obedience. With the agents of this polity, there can be no negotiation, no treaties formed. The maxim is,—all or nothing. Between man and man, there may be some compromise. But not between man and God's vicegerents. The rulers of the kingdoms of this world, may relent and sometimes do. Almost all civil tyrants, are occasionally seized with fits of clemency or generosity; but those, who feel empowered to act for God on earth, have no discretionary powers. In their countenances, the stern features of authority never relax, while a spark of liberty remains unextinguished, in the breasts of those with whom they have to do. The destructive and exterminating religious wars, which have raged so long and so widely, are to be traced to this assumed power in ecclesiastics, to subdue, but not to stipulate. The enemy is not to be treated with while arms are in his hands. His submission can be accepted only from his knees. Whoever will read the history of the governments of the professed ministers of the gospel, and suffer himself to reason and reflect, need only to inspect a form of this kind of polity, to foretell with almost unerring certainty, how it will operate, whether by fear or otherwise. All systems which require absolute submission, do violence to human nature, and can only be maintained by a spirit of

fear ;—the fear of ignorance and the fear of force combined. The education and instruction of the great mass of the people are neglected, and learning is made a kind of mystery or political secret, into which none but favorites are initiated. All that is communicated to the governed, is intended to convince them of their own ignorance and weakness, and the wisdom and strength of their superiors.

There was a time, when all Europe was under the dominion of one great hierarchy. The world then witnessed, and wondered at the unbounded avarice and ambition of priests. Then emperors and kings trembled and prostrated themselves, before the triple crown. Then, indeed, was the spirit of fear given to purpose. That was an iron age and a reign of terror ; and that terror has been perpetuated and realized, in every country, where kings have allowed an inquisition :—but God hath not given us the spirit of fear.

Nations have been terrified and rendered abject by the teachers of the gospel ; and yet, O grief to speak it ! reformers with all these humiliating facts before their eyes, have had recourse to this carnal policy, and employed these carnal weapons. We are anxious to vindicate the gospel from all part and lot in this matter. No, this is not the spirit of God's children. God gave not this spirit. It came not from above. It proceeded not from the Father of lights. It was unknown among the apostles and the first christians. The New Testament involved none of these consequences. Its divine and gracious author, who knew what was in man, for he knew the hearts of all men, did not mean to abstract all power from the many, to give it unto one, or the few. He did not allow this fatal germ of domination, "who shall be the greatest" to grow up among his disciples ; but plucked it up by the roots. He set them no example of an hierarchy ;—taught them none of its maxims. Love, not fear, was to be the principle of their government.

But as men now, and in this country more than in any former age or country, must be governed by opinion, it behooves us to discuss the question of St. Peter's supremacy more fully, before we conclude this part of our discourse. We shall therefore resume the consideration of the rock and the keys. Admitting, that the name and the things were given to Simon, how were they given ? In fee simple, to him and his heirs for ever ? Or as in cases of corporations sole ; to him and his successors ? It is a maxim in English law, that if a grant be made to a bishop, or abbot, or parson,

without any mention of successors, it is only a grant for life. But if it be made to a corporation aggregate, as to a dean and chapter, successors need not be mentioned. Now according to this distinction, the grant was made to Peter as a corporation sole, for the grant was not made to Peter and the Apostles as a corporation aggregate; his successors ought therefore to have been mentioned in the grant. Otherwise, it was only a grant to Peter for life. But the things here granted, are not things to be used in succession. On this rock I will build my church; taking the word rock in the sense of a foundation, it must imply something to be done at once; and not in continuation, like a government. To prove this, we have only to refer to the third chapter of first Corinthians, where we find that that church was divided into parties; one party saying "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos." "Who then," says the writer, "is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?" &c. "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But better every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." This passage is made sufficiently plain, by referring to Romans xv. 20. "Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation." Not a word occurs in these memorable passages, about Peter. The reason is manifest. The name of Christ was the rock, Simon was only surnamed Peter. But he had the grant of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. True he had, though not to his successors. These keys were employed to open, not to shut; to unlock, not to re-lock. This dispensation was to be the last; not, like the law, to be closed in order to make way for another. The strange notion, that Peter was endued with the power of suspending or withholding the gospel, by an interdict, after the manner of his supposed successors, has no shadow of warrant either from the text or any part of the scripture. The writers of the New Testament did not write it in order to keep it out of the hands of the common people. They gave no threatenings against any one who should read. And, therefore, nobody was afraid to read it. It stood precisely in this respect, on the same ground as the law or the Old Testament. The things contained in it were revealed, and therefore belong unto us and to our children. They

were not the secret things that belong unto the Lord our God; or exclusively to his ministers. This gospel of the kingdom, must be preached to every creature under heaven. And I, says Paul, am made one of its ministers, and wo is me if I preach not the gospel;—if I lock it up;—if I take away this key of knowledge. It only remains, that we notice Ephesians iv. 11. "And he gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. We have been taught to accept this passage as proof, that God hath appointed and ordained divers orders of ministers in his church; as though they all existed contemporaneously and in gradation, one above another. But will the text bear this construction? We think not. The words translated some, commonly mean part, and so they are rendered in the parable of the sower. Matthew xiii. And some brought forth an hundred, and some sixty, and some thirty. That is, some part of the seed sown, a part brought forth—and another part, &c. And he gave apostles to a part of the church;—to a part prophets;—to a part evangelists;—to a part pastors and teachers: that is, to some portions and periods of the church, one; and to other portions and periods, another.

It should be noticed, that only pastors and teachers are joined together by the conjunction *and*. These two only are of necessity contemporaneous. The others may be so accidentally. This partitive sense of the Greek words, *sous*, men, and *sous de*, is noticed in the Greek Grammar, and the example given is, men are partly good and partly bad.

To conclude, we have seen that the first disciples in the school of the Great Teacher, were not educated in, or taught, the principle of servility. Their judgments and hearts were not degraded with awful notions of human headship or supremacy among themselves. On this example of education, we are disposed to lay the greatest stress. For as far as we know, it has not been exactly imitated, in any system of ministerial or religious education. No catechism or part of a catechism has been modelled upon it. Even under the congregational forms and democratical governments, we suspect, that the subject of ministerial power in the church, has not been reduced to its simplest elements, so as to become perfectly easy and familiar to the common people. Experience and observation incline us more and more to believe, that the only way to rescue the ministerial character from contempt, is, to disengage it from all super-

stitious reverence. In flattery, there is always deception, both in the minds of those who give, and those who receive it; and this blind and weak side, will be readily detected by an enemy. Our children should be educated to respect good men, and men in office; but not to fear them. If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

PART III.

In our two former numbers, we labored, and we trust not wholly in vain, to prove, that the gospel, whether considered as a system of government or of education, is not productive of a servile spirit. We shall now direct our attention to the second acceptation of the spirit of fear, viz. superstitious, or excessive, or erroneous religious fear. Almost all the writers of antiquity, who by modern courtesy continue to be called philosophers, and most of the christians who aim, in some degree, to copy their cast of thought, as well as professed infidels, indulge in censure and sarcasm against religious fears. One of the great causes of ancient superstition evidently was, the dark uncertainty in which all religion was involved. Life and immortality were not then fully brought out into the light. The knowledge of certain religious facts and truths, had been preserved to them through tradition. Out of these detached and imperfect fragments, their systems were fabricated by the aid of imagination. Accordingly we find, that almost all the ancient systems of mythology may be traced to the poets, beyond whose time we can find neither history nor record. It was, perhaps, well intended in more advanced periods of knowledge to make philosophy bear upon religion, and thus to take it from under the dominion of the imagination. In one, if not more of the schools, which attempted to reduce religion to science, atheism prevailed. The superficial veils, and the disguises of the poets, were easily seen through; and traditions, without the aid of record, could furnish no evidence worthy the attention of philosophers. Searching through such a medium, and with such data, it was matter of course, that they could not find out God. And the process of "tracing nature up to nature's God," now supposed to be easy, could not have been expected of men who sought to find the eternal mind in matter alone. Unsuccessful in all their supposed rational researches, they laid it

down as an axiom, that "fear made the first gods." But to this conclusion we oppose the maxim, "they who know nothing, fear nothing." All nations appear to have had some knowledge of God; though it is only in one instance that this kind of knowledge can be traced historically to a proper source. The bible tells us, that God made himself known to the first man; and, that he did this, in virtue of having impressed on his mind so much resemblance to his own, as to render him capable of receiving such communications.

Now in those schools, which endeavored to engraft science upon the mythology of the poets, in order to give it the greater effect, as an instrument of government, the darkness was left sufficiently visible to give full scope for the terrors of the imagination. Pythagoras and Plato, and even Socrates himself, may be said to have given the spirit of fear, in so far, as they sanctioned the corrupted traditions, and the fables of the poets. Ignorance, or imperfect knowledge, pervaded the mind upon those very points, the knowledge of which, alone, can dissipate fear and inspire confidence. This kind of knowledge, and the fear consequent upon it, were, as far as the purposes of government might be concerned, rather to be encouraged and confirmed than corrected. Of what avail, for instance, would oracles, and other institutions, have been in the hands of politicians, if the meridian light of religious truth, had shone upon the rational mind? The mysteries and all the awful process of initiation into their arcana prove, of how much importance fear was in the ancient systems of religion and government. We have no doubt, that a considerable degree of superstitious fear was necessary to those governments; and to those also of modern times, which bear a resemblance to them. In fact, the atheists among the Greeks did incalculable injury to the morals of society, by destroying that kind of fear of the Gods, which the framers and ministrators of the government intended to act as restraints upon the passions and appetites of the people; and by supplying nothing in its place. Among a people, whose religion is half superstition, and whose science leads to atheism, the moral restraints upon the passions, must needs be weak and unsteady. The atheists might say, indeed, *we* give not the spirit of fear; but could not add—but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind: Superstitious fear, like servile fear, weakens the faculties, and hence it is found to supply a feeble agency

for the active virtues; and the passions and appetites re-act with increased violence, when the restraining terror ceases to be felt. Most of the ancient sages had a pretty correct notion of the necessity of a higher and more potent motive than fear, as essential to the practice of virtue. Upon this subject, however, they could do little more than speculate. For though they might see the necessity of the case, they had neither principles nor means to accomplish their purposes. Whenever, therefore, they resorted to practice, like all other men, they could only use the means they had;—not those they felt the want of: much less, those of which they were quite ignorant. In the characters and attributes of the celestial deities of the heathen, there was little to animate the heart with a steady affection. Love to the gods, among the best of them, could not have exceeded their knowledge of the lovely and merciful part of their nature. And the number of objects among which their love was divided, naturally tended to weaken it. The effects of unity and division in the objects of our love and fear, are the reverse of each other. Love is increased by unity in the subject to be loved, and fear by a plurality of terrible objects. The love of the ancient polytheists to their gods, approached, by its generality, to what is called the love of benevolence, rather than that of a child to a parent. In addition to this, we may notice the unhappy effect upon their love and their fear, which the mixture of physical attributes in these supposed deities were calculated to produce. In the purest attachments to such a being, a degree of carnal or physical affection was almost unavoidable. How, for instance, could the line of distinction be drawn between the spiritual and the natural, in the heart, when no such line could be recognized in the object loved? But the effect of this composition of passion with devotion, while it diminishes love, increases fear. Of this, the writings of the ancients abound with examples. Our Saviour refers to it: "After all these things do the Gentiles seek;" (to their goddess Fortune.)

Next to superstitious fear, as thus exemplified in the idolators, we may notice enthusiastic fear, to which we have already made some allusion. This kind or mode of fear, is supposed to be produced by what is called enthusiastic preaching. The fear of hell and future punishment. And within a century past, this has been considered as one of the evils of enforcing experimental religion. It is chiefly

on account of this association, that we deem it of particular importance, to bring it under investigation. The fear of penitents, is to be considered as preparatory to the gospel, rather than as a consequence of it. Let the case be stated thus: of two kinds of preaching, viz. one which asserts, and the other denies the knowledge of salvation through the remission of sins. Which is the most calculated to give the spirit of fear? We can come to the conclusion by a short and direct process. All the parties to the question will readily acknowledge themselves to be sinners. But this acknowledgment cannot be made under a consciousness of guilt and a doubt of pardon, without fear. Every guilty man is afraid of the law; every unpardoned criminal is afraid of punishment. If the gospel holds out no knowledge or assurance of pardon, it leaves all under the spirit of fear. Why is one professor of religion afraid to die, and another willing, and even desirous to depart and be with Christ? One of the objects of the gospel is, to deliver those who all their life time, through fear of death, were subject to bondage. The most destructive doctrine of the gospel is assurance. Those who deny this doctrine, are mostly consistent with themselves. They do not affect to conceal the fact, that their fear produces doubts. Their only shelter and consolation is, the universality of their case. They have fears to be sure, but they tell us, the best of men are not without them; as the gospel furnishes no remedy for them. Is not this saying in effect, that the gospel shews us our danger, but not our remedy? Or in other words leaves us in a state of imperfect knowledge upon this important point? It is extraordinary, that those who teach a plan of salvation, which secures to the believer an experimental knowledge of the pardon of sin, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, should have the spirit of fear urged against their system, as one of its most pernicious consequences, by men who make their doubts and fears, a kind of duty and virtue, a proof and test as it were, that they are good christians. The believers to whom the Epistle to the Romans was written, had not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but the spirit of adoption, whereby they could cry Abba father. The Spirit bore witness with their spirit, that they were the children of God. Paul knew in whom he had believed, and was persuaded of his ability to save his soul. St. John's believers, had the witness in themselves. The light of the gospel, is the great light; the light of the glory of God

shining in the face of Jesus Christ. He who follows this Saviour, does not walk in darkness; for he has the light of life. Every thing in the gospel bespeaks assurance. The abundance of the love proclaimed—the unparalleled evidence of it—the rich effusion of grace, and all the precious and exceeding great promises, authorise this conclusion. "God hath not given the spirit of fear."

But we must hasten on to the positive parts of our subject. Fear and courage have a reference to inanimate, as well as animate subjects; or rather to things as well as persons. So we say, men are afraid of labor, and of dangers, as well as of enemies. And we suppose, power implies courage, that is moral and intellectual strength. There are three causes of power, fortitude or energy, under the excitement of which, mankind most commonly act, which the Apostle seems to exclude from the gospel, by saying, that it gives us the spirit of love and a sound mind, viz. self-love, hatred, and intoxication, or the selfish affections, the malevolent passions, and a drunken or mad state of mind. If he had said, God hath given us the spirit of self-love—the spirit of hatred and revenge—and the spirit of intoxication, none of the princes of this world, would have had any difficulty in understanding him. The art by which those men govern the human race, is the same in all ages and countries. They begin by making themselves to be feared; but men in a mere state of servility, have no courage. They cannot fight. When, therefore they want to use their servile dependents for defence or conquest, they inspire them with hatred to their enemies, and madden their brains by ambition or alcohol. These mortal gods of the earth, can form no idea of a race of heroic and vigorous subjects, without servile or superstitious fear, animated with an ardent love to the human race, and quite sober minded, self collected and rational. In our own country, we have a striking example of the truth of our theory. Why can we make no military use of our colored slaves? Why are we afraid to trust arms in their hands? Not surely, because they fear their masters more than any other slaves, or because their bondage is harder; for this is not the fact. They are not punished for disobedience as severely as soldiers; nor shot for running away, as soldiers are for desertion. The reason is, we have no enemy against whom we can rouse their vindictive and revengeful passions; and thus to madden their minds without these passions, they will be timid

and cowardly, and with them our own safety might be endangered. If God hath given to the ministers and members of the christian church, the spirit of love, and of a sound or sober mind, and they are, nevertheless, strong and courageous, is it not plain, that his kingdom is not of this world? In the freest republics, not excepting our own, can men be governed by benevolence and intelligence alone? Can an American statesman get on, and maintain his popularity, without great skill in the management of the selfish and irascible feelings? Will it not be well if he stops here, and does not find, or thinks he finds it necessary, to influence the rational feelings, and intoxicate the rational mind with the images of war.

A truly scriptural education and government, as well as experience, tend to produce love and benevolence, and a healthy and vigorous state of mind. God hath given us the spirit of love. He hath taught us in a way that we are no where else taught; that he hath made of one blood all the nations of the earth; that he is loving to every man, and his tender mercies are over all his works. He hath given most unexampled demonstration of his love to the world, the universe of his creatures, in the gift of his only begotten Son. It is in the gospel chiefly, that we learn the true relation of man to man, and our obligation to love every creature whom God hath made in the common likeness to himself and to one another. And this is the only true foundation of universal benevolence, the only consideration which can sustain in our hearts, a feeling of humanity, under the various, and almost innumerable temptations to make personal and rational exceptions to the objects of its exercise. This spirit of love enables us to struggle successfully against irascible emotions and malevolent propensities. Few men hate forever; and among those that do, who hates every body? It is the enlarged and steady feelings of good will to man, which is so rare among good men; and still more rarely imbibed in principles like our mother's milk, is the first food of nature.

But a system of religious education should give us a sound mind, as well as a warm heart. The history of all nations, and of all individuals, shows how much soundness of mind depends upon education. All infant and uninstructed minds, are naturally weak, and their first conceptions imperfect or erroneous: and a bad education unavoidably tends to confirm or aggravate these evils. We

do not mean to be understood to say, that education alone, can make us christians. But we do say, that the scriptures abound with truth and facts, which may be derived into the mind by education, in a way at once calculated to improve the head and mend the heart.

With these principles, will it not be possible to analyze any religious system of ancient or modern times, and to demonstrate its nature and tendency? The common manner among the professors and advocates of different systems, really amounts to nothing more than self-praise or self-flattery, and comes to the same end. Every man's opinions, himself being judge, are the best. This is evidently for the want of or the rejection of the proper data or criterion.* Take as an example, the propagation of religion by the sword. Do not those, who are found following in the wake of religious conquerors evince, that the sword gives the spirit of fear, and of course is an improper instrument of conversion? Let the gospel be considered as a book, and is there any piece of religious composition of a less terrifying character? Let it be considered in regard to its first ministers, or its first propagation; and shall we not realize the justness of the comparison, of sheep among wolves? No Musselman affects to conceal or blushes to own the victories by which the mission of his prophet is demonstrated; but the rapidity and extent of those conquests are too well known to need repetition. Now, the theological tenets or creeds of men, consecrate no bad passions. We cannot say of any military mission, that it gives the spirit of love, and of a sound mind. The love of man to man, as a fellow creature, as a brother of a kindred nature, and the soundness of mind necessary to reflection upon religion and morality, have little place in armies; nor are they calculated to supply the kind of strength or courage needed to wield and withstand the weapons of destruction.

The men who, at the word or frown of their leaders, march to the cannon's mouth, or rush upon the sword's point, and those who tremble under the lash, possess a common nature, and may be in equal bondage. Whence then, this immense difference in their courage? It is evidently owing to the artificial management of the passions and the imagination. A certain class of the Irish nation,

* Principles or standards.

are a remarkable example of this. They are treated by their rulers, as the worst subjects in the world, and praised by them as the best soldiers. Political vassals, in all ages and countries, have been employed to conquer their master's foes, and are easily rendered sufficiently fierce and furious to accomplish all the purposes of hatred and revenge. In what did the soldiers of the cross and crescent differ? Not in their liberty—not in their benevolence—not in their intelligence. The leaders on each side were absolute and tyrannical. Anger and wrath, hatred and revenge, raged furiously in the breasts of the hostile ranks; and their minds were bewildered and inflamed by the most irrational enthusiasm. Peter the hermit, in preaching a crusade against the infidels, gave no spirit of love towards the possessors of the holy sepulchre. And St. Louis received quite as humane treatment from his conqueror, Saladin, as he had ever shown to his captives. The truth is, that in all religious causes, an appeal to the sword, is an appeal to all the malevolent passions in the human heart, and these are trusted to, under the name of the God of battles. Slaves, without hatred and revenge, and the enthusiasm of a military ardor, cannot be kept in the ranks, to kill or be killed. They feel not sufficient energy to maintain the bloody strife; all other circumstances being equal, they must always be conquered by free men; unless their passions can be stimulated to madness, and their imaginations to phrenzy. This is the reason why servile armies have proved so ferocious and unrelenting in victory. The violent impulse of the passions, when the resistance is overcome, like a raging torrent breaking through an opposing mound, spreads ruin and destruction far and wide. The wars, therefore, of free and well balanced governments, will be either defensive or come of the lusts which war in the members of the people, rather than in those of the rulers. Hence, to make men civilly and religiously free, is to make an advance towards the peace of nations; as wars will not only become less frequent, but less destructive. Already, from the partial influence of liberty and religion, some limits have been fixed to wars of extermination. But from liberty alone, without love and a sound mind, which the gospel only can give, we shall look in vain for a millenium.

Are we not now prepared to demonstrate, that the gospel is neither priest-craft, nor king-craft. That it is not of hu-

man invention, and that, in fact, if men could have invented it, they could have made no use of it. It would have remained in their hands, as a mere theory, for the want of the inspiring spirit of love. Of what avail would it have been, for the human inventor of such a system, to have sent forth his apostles, into this world of strife and war, like lambs among wolves? Even the sober minded disciples of Jesus, who were made free indeed, and as fearless and as innocent as they were free, could have made no true converts to him, without the spirit of love. The productive principle, in all religions, is *feeling*;—some modification of love or hate, in the heart of the preacher. When religious orders become cold and formal, they make no proselytes; but owe almost all their increase and stability, to family progression.

To found a religion—to originate and propagate a new system or order of religion, fear or folly, love or hatred, must be brought into operation. Old customs, immemorial traditions, prejudices of education, national partialities and enmities, parental authority, &c. all may strengthen old systems, and in so far as they are so employed, they must countervail new ones. "He," the Messiah, says John, "came to his own, and his own received him not." "But, to as many as did receive him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God," and then adds, "who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man; but of God:" thus, embracing the usual, if not the only means of making converts among mankind.

Now, if all the denominations of christians in our country, were to be weighed in these balances, in what would they be found wanting? We have all had a beginning, and a progress; but may it not be doubted, whether the inference we usually draw from these premises, is perfectly logical. It is the nature of the fact which is to be proved to be true, and yet we produce the fact, itself, to prove its truth. The antiquity or duration of a religious denomination, is no proof of the truth of its principles or dispositions; as these are constantly liable to change, while they retain the same name. Anxiety, in a religious order, to prove the purity and excellence of their founder and first foundation, may be unreasonable and excessive. A disposition to improve an improveable subject, is always more commendable, than tenacity of mere ancestral opinions. We are persuaded, that as long as we have the New Tes-

tament, the age of a denomination, the great names to which it owes its reputation, the number and distinction of its members, and other things of this kind, cannot be of indispensable importance or amount to decisive proof, that the truths of christianity, are exclusively possessed and practised within its pale. The spirit of fear, for instance, may have been in a greater or less degree employed by a religious leader, and his followers may have corrected or reformed this part of the system. Or, the founder may have been opposed to all servile and superstitious fear, and those who come after, greatly degenerated in this respect. The same nominal order of men, may be conspicuous for the spirit of love at one time, and equally so at another for the want of it. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," is a proverb, which, in this point of view, is no more to be used in our Israel. For as we all may degenerate, so we may all-improve. Rules and forms of ministerial and church government-injurious or oppressive in their nature or tendency, may be altered or repealed; or if they continue in the statute book, the more enlarged and liberal views of the times, may render them a dead letter.

If our analysis is correct, or our tests to be relied upon, the religion of none of the churches or religious orders in our country, our own not excepted, is perfectly pure or scriptural. We all have either too much fear, or too little love. Either too little power, or too little soundness of mind. When our religion shall degenerate into a compound of fear and folly, and ill-natured or inhuman feelings, the measure of our depravity will be well nigh filled up; the candlestick be about to be removed, and Ichabod to appear like the hand writing upon the wall against us.

God, in the gospel, hath given us liberty and intellectual capacity, and all the means, the truths, and the graces, necessary to enlarge our hearts, and inspire them with the most devout and benevolent affections. What folly, what madness will it be it be in us, to prefer to these excellent gifts, a cowardly and timid spirit, or a vicious heart and infatuated mind?

PALEMON.

No. 52.

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Dokemasius to the Editors of the Mutual Rights.

I cannot reasonably object to pay,—

A tax that all must pay ;—

From those who scribble, up to those who pray ;—

Nor would I say one word in reply to "One of the Laity," if the matter to which he adverted had been published in the *Mutual Rights*, or if he had given a fair and full quotation of my words. Several of your readers, it may fairly be presumed, will have never seen the letters from "*Dokemasius*" to "*Amicus*;" and, if disposed to see them, may not be able to procure the 2d volume of the *Wesleyan Repository*. My words are—"Yet, notwithstanding, it does seem strange to some persons, that a church and a ministry, with no power save what is derived from one man, should be defended with so much zeal; they had imagined, that men would shrink from an ocean where all their personal identity as christians and ministers must be swallowed up. But whoever looks carefully into the matter, will perceive, that though such may be the fact, it is not perceived by themselves, that classes, and congregations, and stations, and circuits, and districts, conceive themselves to be whole and entire churches; and that class leaders and stewards, and travelling preachers, and deacons, and elders, and presiding elders, feel like a sort of bishops, and of course dread a change in the present system. That this, in many instances, is the state of men's views and feelings among us, there is sufficient reason to believe, and these views and feelings account for the tenacity with which they cleave to the present economy. Mr. Hume, in a very able essay, explains the fact, that the Persians submitted for a long time to their conquerors the Greeks, by proving that the successors of Alexander, adopted the policy of the Persian kings. Their policy was the same in civil matters, that ours is in church government. In one view it seems very humiliating, that a whole community, whether civil or religious, should be entirely dependent upon one man; but in another, it is easy to perceive that such a state of dependence must generate expectation, that the same hand which humbles us, exalts us also. By sweeping away every vestige of aristocratical authority, as well as personal liberty, it is, that all absolute governments, whether in church or state, animate the hopes of

all, from the least unto the greatest ; so that the men who have no security for their highest honors, are, nevertheless, stimulated to the greatest fidelity and zeal in the service of the superior, knowing that all are waiting and watching for their place. Were it not for this great principle of attachment and hope, all the monarchies, and hierarchies, and ours among the rest, would soon fall into ruins. I can, for myself, endure our government, though by a singular anomaly it excludes me, (in common with the rest of my order) not only from all hope of promotion, or reward, but from the possibility of thinking (as others do) that I have some power or consequence, while I have none. I can endure almost any thing from Methodist preachers, except their attempts to prove that this order of things is scriptural."

"Mr. A's favorite and common-place maxim, 'local men have local ideas,' proves how little he was versed in atomic philosophy. He had often seen among us the worst kind of selfishness, which, instead of tracing to its true cause, misguided and misplaced ideas, he strangely attributed to local views. The truth is, that local ideas and feelings are the proper basis of all benevolent and liberal sentiments ; and may unite with others to an indefinite extent. We have had abundant occasion to remark, that those who travel away all their localities, travel away all their virtues." "Mark that word *endure*," says One of the Laity, "a great deal of meaning is couched in it." It is, indeed, a most significant and comprehensive word when it undergoes the operation of his pen, for he makes it to mean *cannot endure*. "But here," he says, "I cannot forbear to ask, is such a man worthy of what he so plainly appears to be seeking, who can, unblushingly, tell the world, that that great man of God, the late venerable Bishop Asbury, by having travelled away all his 'localities,' had travelled away all his 'virtues?' This, to be sure, he advances in a covert and rather an indirect manner ; but any one, possessed of two ideas, who will take the trouble to compare his conclusion with the premises which he had just laid down, will not, I think, say that I have misrepresented him." Now, it seems, that if any man who has two ideas can clearly prove that this writer has misrepresented me, he has not the smallest objection to make a suitable acknowledgment. Who is to be the judge of this suitableness? If Mr. A. ever had any localities, they must have been those of an old English Methodist preacher, and one among the number must have

been, that all church government ought to be in the hands of travelling preachers. Will any man, save this One of the Laity, say that I unblushingly, or in a covert and rather an indirect manner, tell the world that Mr. Asbury, by coming from England to America, and travelling year after year through these states, travelled away the opinions which he held in England respecting the powers and prerogatives of travelling preachers? No man knew better than I did, Mr. Asbury's unalterable attachments to Wesleyan powers and prerogatives; and no man, I presume, took the liberty to converse more freely with him respecting his national prejudices—and it is due to his memory to say, that, in most cases, he took my-remarks in good part. He was the last man in the world that I could have suspected of travelling away his localities. Can this writer appeal to the Searcher of hearts, that he really believes that I meant or intended, that Mr. Asbury travelled away all his virtues? If he can, he will do well to waste no more ink upon me; and I can assure you that I shall trouble you with no more remarks upon the productions of *his* pen.

Yours, &c.

DOKEMASIUS.

An address to the Ministers and Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, appears in April, 1825; by Bartimeus. (Rev. A. Shinn.)

Mr. McCaine writes in the 1st volume of the *Mutual Rights*, with the signature of Nehemiah.

Volume II, of *Mutual Rights*, &c. begins with August. Dr. S. K. Jennings, chairman of the editorial committee.

Rev. James Smith withdraws from the *Mutual Rights* cause.

WATERS. Gideon Davis, Esq. writes with the signature of Zuingle.

No. 53.

Mutual Rights, vol. ii. November, 1825, page 82.

The Necessity of Union.

The motto, "united we stand, divided we fall," is peculiarly applicable to us, as our professed object is not so much to obtain abstract rights, as those which are mutual. What but a downfall can happen to the men who cannot agree upon the "do as you would be done by" plan? Some of our brethren being judged according to outward appear-

ances, are considered as traitors to the cause of reform ; but though I do not view them in so unfavorable a point of light, yet I cannot put a favorable construction upon their movements. Their "trumpet gives an uncertain sound." They perplex and paralyze the minds of their friends, and strengthen the hands of their opponents. These good friends of the cause of reform it seems, are terribly afraid lest "we should run wild ;" and to prevent this, when a practical crisis approaches, they are found in the opposition ranks, or declare themselves neutrals. I have said a thousand times over, and I repeat it again ; our object is not to make or to destroy laws or rules of government, but to render the principles of legislation mutual and common to all who are subject to legislative control. Who does not remember Mr. Asbury's point and severity when the subject of local or lay-membership in the conferences was touched upon. He manifested a feeling of indignity at the idea of men coming into conference, to regulate the concerns of travelling preachers, in which they could have no participation. So far all was well. Had he gone one step further, and involved the maxim, "it is a bad rule which will not work both ways," he would have come out right. But no sooner did the conferences begin to make rules to regulate the concerns of local preachers and the members of the church, than the point and edge of his feelings became blunted. I instance Mr. Asbury, because it is well known that he gave the key note. Let this principle go fully into operation, and it is plain, that we must have three legislative bodies, each legislating their own separate concerns. The only remedy is in the significant and well chosen word *Mutual*—in the give and take plan—in all voting together whether the question relates to one or to all. Take away the mutual action, and all is wild uproar and confusion, or the death-like stillness of despotism ; for without this action in the social system, it can only vibrate from anarchy to oppression.

It is amusing to see how ingenious some of our anti-reformers are in finding out parallels between our government and the government of the United States ; suppose they try their skill in looking for parallels between the patriots of '76, and some of our *professed* reformers, would they not be equally puzzled as if they should attempt to find out the points of agreement between one who steers by the pole star, and one who is guided in his course by a meteor ? I, says one, should be for a lay-representation, if it were prac-

licable. And I, says another, should have no objection to the local preachers being represented, if I thought the General Conference would grant it. Is not this giving up the cause? If brethren doubt it; let them look at the consequences. Suppose a new set of legislators, like the king who knew not Joseph, should arise to oppress our Israel—to bind heavy burdens and grievous to borne upon us, what could these brethren say? Would they say as they now say, we should have no objection to a representative government if it were practicable? Surely this is giving up a cause for lost. Old patriots used not to speak thus, but when their country's rights were invaded, would talk about dying in the last ditch. Ah! brethren when you tell us that you give up the cause of representation as impracticable, you wound, you kill us in the house of our friends. Your fears, I trust, and not as some suppose, your treachery, have betrayed you into this; but in the name of common sense, and of a common cause, why proclaim your fears? Do you not perceive that you put words into the mouths of our opponents; that you plead their cause? Let any case be admitted as impracticable, and who will be blamed for not attempting it? We know that lay-representation is practicable in other churches; and the United brethren have proved it to be practicable for the members to elect delegates from among their travelling and local preachers to their General Conference without destroying their itinerancy. And he must be a sceptic indeed who can doubt that they derive benefit, as well as security from representation. Under this polity, the Protestant Episcopal church is fast rising into consequence; and the Lutheran, and German Reformed churches increase, and are united.

Would not our friends do well, to reserve their apprehensions of "running wild," at least in part, for others as well as ourselves? Little as they suspect it, "old side" men may innovate; but when they attempt any thing in this way, they do it systematically—the plan is first made out by the aid of two or three confidential men; then it goes the rounds; partizans are secured, and noses are counted; and if by the ensuing General Conference the majority is gained, all is ripe and ready for adoption by a final vote. I think it highly probable, if not certain, that changes are now in contemplation, but what these changes are, we shall not be permitted to know before the time. My conjectures and suspicions are, that mutual rights will make no part of them.

It is not unlikely that these matters may get wind ; but whether or not, I confidently predict, that any plan which does not secure the right of suffrage will fail in the great and essential point of securing the union of the body. The time is fast approaching when churchmen will lose all confidence in those who legislate their rights away, or legislate without regard to them. Suppose for instance, that instead of the present assent of all the annual conferences, two-thirds should be substituted ; and that presiding elders should be converted into chairmen, &c., with a station, &c., will not the language of the discipline still be in effect to the members "stand by thyself, come not nigh unto us, for we are holier than thou."

I again entreat the friends of the principle of representation, to be true to their purpose. A united body of travelling and local preachers and members, who will not be moved away from their steadfastness in this great and glorious cause, must gather strength and increase in numbers. If from no other cause, from this one alone, viz. nine parts out of ten of those on the opposite side, are really laboring under a mental deception ; they suppose that rights can be gained or secured without representation, but experience must tend to dissipate this illusion. In the heat of controversy it may happen, that men cannot reflect ; but changes present men and things in different points of light. Some of those who have been the most fierce in their opposition, may be expected to lose the balance of their prejudices, and be turned fairly round. One fact must be apparent to us all : it is this, that almost all the opposition we have had to encounter has been personal. This of itself determines the course we ought to pursue. Our principles cannot be refuted ; but time will be required to live down the prejudices which have been propagated against our dispositions and intentions. As soon as it is perceived that goodness is on our side, the truth of our cause will be evident ; for a doubt of the former, is the veil which hides the latter from public view.

I flatter myself that the essays of "*Bartimeus*," will have their influence upon those travelling preachers who may chance to read them. A few more such champions for our cause must force hot-heads to pause. Those of our friends who have been four years true and steady to the cause, must feel indescribable complacency in reading this most masterly vindication of the part they have acted. Such are the

sweet rewards of *consistency* and constancy in a good cause. Had we abandoned the principle, these essays or addresses could not have existed, the object and the excitement would have been wanting; and genius itself cannot write without these. Every day's experience and observation produces fresh conviction in my mind, that not only our future union, but also our prosperity, depends upon a hearty admission, by all parties among us, of the principle of representation. No language can describe my emotions when I hear brethren talk of giving up the rights of any party among us, to carry a point or to gain an accommodation. It is a basis for universal confidence which we want. Where else shall we find it, if we give up the right of suffrage? If there could be any remaining doubts at this day, of the unequivocal nature and tendency of equal suffrage, they might be all solved by a reference to the conduct of all the despots of the earth, whose whole history is little else than a detail of their endeavors to prevent or destroy this sacred right. Free voters may indeed err as it regards their own true interests; for like hierarchists they are fallible; but their interests naturally countervail their errors, whereas, the interests of absolute rulers are all embarked on the other side.

From the beginning, I took the ground on which I could challenge the confidence of all my brethren; and on this ground I still stand. I have nothing to conceal, nothing to fear, nothing to barter, or to modify. All that I aim at, all that I ask, is for all. Extending my confidence to all, have I not a right to expect in return, what I give? What room is here for jealousy or suspicion? Let not those who deprive me of my right of suffrage blame me for not feeling confidence towards them, as they themselves put it out of my power to do so. O, why will they be so unreasonable, so unjust as to demand that which they refuse to give. We have, my brethren a plain course to pursue; a plain answer to give to all men. Let us leave to those who take it upon themselves to make laws for others without their consent, to begin their work in the dark. In secret we have nothing to say—our address should be, "is thy heart right as my heart is with thy heart?—then give me thy hand." Only let us persevere in maintaining the broad principle of representation, and we must finally secure the approbation of heaven and earth. I am aware brethren, that I have been accused of ambition—of aspiring at the distinction of a leader in this business; it is true, that as a matter of necessity I must

have my name among the first in the order of time, but in every thing else I hope, you will all more than emulate me. In perseverance, in prudence, in zeal, let us all strive to be, at least, equals.—We shall really do God service—our brethren, our countrymen, and our children shall rise up and call us blessed. O how my heart mourns over those who have let another man take their crown! And should any more among us desert the cause, we can only regret that they should count themselves unworthy of our confidence, and the confidence of the lovers of the true principles of religious liberty.

NICHOLAS SNETHEN.

Lingapore, Oct. 12, 1825.

November, 1825. A letter is published from the Union Society of Bedford county, Tennessee, stating that the presiding elder publicly read out the names of fourteen official members, some of whom were local preachers. The number of local preachers expelled, cut off, or censured, are nine or ten, besides exhorters. When these trials are ended, (they say) if the common members will not abandon the 'Union Society,' these also will be turned out. An appeal was taken to the annual conference. In February, 1826, letters were published, stating that all the local preachers who had taken appeals to the annual conference were restored, and the presiding elder censured, &c.

No. 54.

Mutual Rights, vol. II. February, 1826, p. 154, p. 171.

A Discourse on the Supremacy.

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things *whatsoever I have commanded you.*"—Mat. xxviii. 18, 19, 20.

It is a fact, that the commission which our Lord gave to his apostles, before his resurrection, differed in several respects from the one which he gave afterwards. Is it upon this fact, that certain writers have predicated an intermediate dispensation between the law and the gospel? The following are the terms of the first mission. "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of

the house of Israel, and as ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of God is at hand."—Matt. x. 5-7.

Now, we do not perceive, that the apostles, after the pentecost, acted upon the letter or the spirit of the instructions given unto them, and the seventy, in this first instance. These instructions were, indeed, incompatible with the general nature of their future mission. An admission of a distinction in these two commissions, the one given after our Lord began his personal ministry, and the other after his resurrection, to go into operation so soon as the apostles were endued with power from on high, may perhaps be found to have some bearing upon the long controverted subject of the power of the keys. If the first commission was superceded by the second, as it most certainly was—if the apostles did not feel themselves bound before the day of pentecost, as they certainly did not, to go forth among the gentiles, as they were first directed to go through the land of Judea, then, why may we not suppose that other circumstances in this intermediate or previous state of things, might also have been peculiar and limited? When I sent you forth, said Jesus, without purse or scrip, &c., lacked ye any thing? And they said, nothing, Lord. In their subsequent ministry among the nation, they had no such competence, but lacked almost all things, being in hungerings often, and nakedness, and peril. Under what commission was Peter to use the keys, or the binding and loosing power? If the high supremacy which has been predicated upon the grant of power to Peter, had actually gone into operation after the pentecost, would it not have interfered with some of those powers in heaven or in earth, which were given to "the Lord of all?" And is it not reasonable to suppose, that the record of all those operations would have been legible in the acts of the apostles, and other parts of the apostolic writings, in which his name so often occurs? For ourselves, we strongly incline to think, that the ministerial peculiarities which appear in the gospels previous to the crucifixion, were almost all, if we may so speak, merged in this last and general commission; and that the matter was so understood by the apostles, who, from thenceforth, acted, spoke, and wrote on all occasions with an eye to the supremacy of their adored and adorable Lord and master.

There is another question of much importance to be considered. How does this commission effect other preachers

or teachers, who have had no express command or revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ. St. Paul seems to speak to this case, "I certify to you, brethren," says he, "that the gospel which was preached of me, is not after men; for I neither received it of men, neither was I taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ." "But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Here it appears, that Paul received by revelation the same gospel which the twelve had been verbally commanded to teach. From all this, the necessity of a written gospel is manifest.

There are three points which might be separately considered in the text. 1. The supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. The extent of this mission. 3. The matter of instruction. Now, should we take either of these three positions separately, or all of them collectively, could a ministerial supremacy be extracted from them, or the parts of the text from which they are deduced? Let us try the words. 1. "All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth." 2. "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations." 3. "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." No one surely will attempt to draw human supremacy from the remaining part of the passage, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." All power in heaven and in earth, constitutes Jesus Christ the head of the church. Would any degree of power short of this have been sufficient for this high office? Head of a church, which was to exist in all nations, and finally to embrace them all. Would not such a church have to encounter all kinds of enemies and difficulties in the world? Is not ubiquity or universal presence necessary to superintend such a church? What a difference between the Jewish church in the little territory of Judea, and a christian church extending over the surface of the globe! What a difference between a church composed of twelve tribes, and one composed of all nations, kindreds, languages, people, and tongues! Does not this latter church require omnipotent power to defend and protect it? All kinds of power in heaven and in earth. On earth there are three kinds of power; the legislative, the executive, and the judicial. All these belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. How many kinds of power there may be in heaven, we know not; but we do know, that there are meritorious, and forgiving, and interceding, and sanctifying power there.

He has all-redeeming and saving power. And all judgment is committed unto him, that all men may honor the son, even as they honor the father. Go teach all nations, that God is their father, that Jesus Christ is their saviour, and that the Holy Ghost is their sanctifier. Teach them all things whatsoever *I have commanded you*, and nothing else. Keep back nothing that is profitable for them; but teach them not for doctrines, the *commandments of men*. The preachers of the gospel ought to be exceedingly cautious how they take upon themselves the appearance of supremacy over the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. In that day, when he who has all power in heaven and in earth, shall appear on his great white throne, it will be an awful thing, if any of his servants shall be found to have aspired to any of *his* attributes.

We shall take occasion to transcribe a certain portion of scripture, which seems to us to speak of the supremacy or headship of the Lord Jesus Christ over the church, and we shall do this the more carefully from an apprehension, that this point has of late been overlooked. Whether from accident or otherwise, we know not, but it is so, that we do not hear the kingly office of him whose right it is, enough exalted. Has the unaccountable tenacity and zeal with which the legislative power of travelling preachers has been maintained, any influence in this case? Is there a degree of irritation and soreness in some minds upon this point, and in others a delicacy and fear of giving pain? If, from these, or any other causes, we cease to be hearty in maintaining and defending the universal power of him who hath ascended up far above all heavens, the fine gold has become dim, and the wine is mixed with water. In the 1st chapter of the Hebrews, St. Paul is giving all power in heaven and in earth to him whose right it is. God "hath in these last days," says he, "spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, *when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high*. Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they; for unto which of the angels said he at any time, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, when he brought in the first begotten into the world,

he saith, "and let all the angels worship him"—"but unto which of the angels, said he, at any time, sit on my right hand until I make thy enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

We are aware that this whole passage is usually applied in the abstract to the divinity of our Lord, and that the angels are considered as celestial beings, not including the human angels of the churches; but are not the angels of the churches included as a species in the genus? If he said not at any time to any of the celestial angels who dwell in his presence, to any of those pure and sinless spirits, who are endued with such vast intellects and energies. Sit thou on my right hand—occupy the mediatorial throne—be head over all things to the church—be priest forever after the order of Melchizedec, how much less did he say so to any mortal man, whose breath is in his nostrils, who passeth away as a shadow, and continueth not. Are not all the human angels of the churches, including apostles, and prophets, and evangelists, and pastors, and teachers, ministering spirits, are they not sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? So says the scripture—for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. The very idea of immortal spirits, or mortal men, being angels, (messengers as the word means) of there being apostles (that is sent) sent forth—of their being ministers (servants) to minister, (to serve) precludes all pretention in them to supremacy over the church.

That the Apostle had in his mind a conception of the mediatorial supremacy, appears from the next chapter, and the manner in which he illustrates the quotation he makes from the 8th Psalm; "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; for it became him, for whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." This is the conclusion of all the arguments throughout the Epistle. Moses, says he, in the third chapter, was faithful in all his house as a servant, but Christ as a Son over his own house, whose house we are. But this man,

after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, forever sat down at the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting, till his enemies be made his footstool.

But if all the legislative, executive, and judicial power in the church upon earth, is in the Lord Jesus Christ: if there be no ministerial sovereignty over the church, how can there be any discipline in it? Whether St. Paul intended it or not, he has given a satisfactory answer to these enquiries in the 12th chapter of the first Corinthians. The "*helps*" and the "*governments*" he makes it appear are a part of the body, the church, and not the head; servants not masters. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body; so also, Christ, that is Christ's body. For the body is not one member, but many; and if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body, is it, therefore, not of the body? And if travelling preachers shall say, we are not of the body, are they therefore not of the body, but of the head? The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the hand to the feet; I have no need of you; but when preachers, or any body else, claim exclusive powers or prerogatives in the church, do they not say in effect to all others, we have no need of you. We have the right or the power to legislate without the representatives of the church; and we will do so. In former times when the judicial powers used to be all in the travelling preachers, they said, they had no need of the aid of the church to try and expel members. Now, when men do these things, in this kind of independent manner, they do them as the head, and not as the body. They exercise a sovereign and not a ministerial and social power—and there is a schism in the body; for the members have not the same care one for another; if one member suffer, all the members do not suffer with it; and if one member be honored, all the members cannot be honored with it. If the laity suffer by the partial or arbitrary legislation of the preachers, and the preachers reap the fruit of their own laws, how can they sympathize with the laity? Or how can the laity be honored legislatively, when they have no representatives. There is a schism in the body; when the mutual rights, and the mutual sympathies of the preachers and the people are suspended, or destroyed. God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked, that there should be no schism in the body; but that the mem-

bers should have the same care one for another. As in the human body, so in social ones, sympathies are the result of organization and circulation. And as in the bodies of rational beings, there must be species of self-government, so also, in all social bodies, founded on rational principles. No objection is felt, or made to governing power being vested in the preachers of the gospel; but to their governing as the head of the church, and not as its members or instruments. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." The weakest governments are not those which have the least power, but the least degree of social organization. Absolute power of force, strictly speaking, is not government. To govern is to manage the social sympathies and energies, so as to bring the greatest possible degree of general regard to bear upon the general interest. The oldest and most powerful hierarchies, stand recorded upon the pages of history, and will forever stand recorded, for unparalleled corruption and depravity. For all moral and religious purposes, they became utterly impotent—innocence and virtue alone groaned and bled under their iron rule.

The distinction which we have made between governments considered as members of the body, and as the head of the body, seems to us to be fairly deducible from St. Paul's statements and conclusions; and our minds labor under a strange illusion if this distinction is not founded in truth and nature. It is no uncommon thing to hear brethren arguing, that a travelling preacher with absolute legislative power, is the choice or representative of the church, because he was once a member, and has graduated to the office of an elder. Thus confounding the difference between being taken from among the members of the church, and being placed quite above and independent of them. Absolute sovereigns themselves were once subjects; but they cease to be subjects when they are placed above law, and have the law making, and law controlling power in their own hands. The president of the United States, or the governor of any state, on the contrary, is subject to the laws, and has no law making power. The appellation, therefore, of chief magistrate does not affect their citizenship, they are still of the body. Take another example on the descending scale; one fifth of the slaves are represented in the general government; but though they are thus nominally represented, they are not of the body, they are not enfranchised, and

their condition is in no respect altered. The result would be the same with us, if instead of the present apportionment to the number of travelling preachers, the representatives to the General Conference, were apportioned to the number of church members.

The Pope is placed above or over the church, he is the head, and not an instrument or member of the body. Mr. Wesley did not govern as one of the body. All the members and people, who as the phrase is, were in connection with him, were connected with him *only as their head, he was their law maker, he was their judge.* How far his patriarchal character became his authority, we shall not pretend to determine; *but it is as clear as light, that his example can be no precedent for travelling preachers, as they can have no pretensions to the character of fathers or founders.*

As it respects the law making department among us, the church is, as it were, dumb, and the preachers deaf. Our General Conference and all other bodies constituted like it, who have few or no interests in common with those for whom they legislate, must be in a great measure dead to all the social sympathies of well organized bodies. We admonish, we entreat travelling preachers again and again, to beware lest they be found encroaching upon any of the powers in the church of Christ, which belong to the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; and we would do the same to the representatives of the church, if they had any existence among us. The moment that any individual under a christian, or a ministerial character, ceases to act as a member of the body, whether in his public or private capacity, he must encroach upon the prerogatives of the head of the church.

PALEMON.

No. 55.

Mutual Rights, vol. II, April, 1826, p. 189.

Matters worthy of the serious reflection of Travelling Preachers.

Addressed to their consideration by Nicholas Snethen.

Let us enquire what was done by the memorable constitution makers of 1808. Did they, in imitation of their countrymen in Philadelphia, twenty-one years before, guarantee liberty to others while they provided for their own? Why this contrast between a civil and a religious constitution in

the same country? The constitution of the General Government of the United States, guarantees a republican form of government to all the states; but the constitution of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, monopolizes all suffrage and representation to travelling preachers. Now let justice be done, let Mr. Wesley, and necessity, and Britain, and British preachers be exonerated from all blame in this case. To American travelling preachers *alone* this act and deed belongs; and no act and deed, could have been more voluntary. Never were a set of men more free from foreign and adventitious influence; never did a body of men act under a consciousness of more plenary powers. Mr. Wesley's authority had been twice superseded—his name had been erased from the minutes—the council plan had been rejected—the notes on the discipline had been set at nought—and Dr. Coke was no longer in place; and yet, in 1808, in the city of Baltimore, a constitution, [as they have since seen fit to call it,] was gotten up by American travelling preachers, to place themselves as nearly as possible in the condition of the hundred English preachers under the deed of declaration.

Brethren, pause and reflect I beseech you. I know that you have a thousand times proclaimed this state of things to be scriptural, to be right, and stand pledged to defend it to the last extremity; but there is one point of light in which you have not seriously reflected upon this matter: what scripture authority can you produce to authorise you to govern Americans otherwise than as free men? Do the scriptures empower you to govern your fellow citizens as Englishmen, or Frenchmen, or Spaniards are governed? O! brethren this is a serious and awful business, and involves consequences of infinite importance. You proclaim to the world, in effect, your determination not to govern christians, as free men, and to do all you can to prevent them from being so governed. Nay, you are ready to reply, you wrong us much, we are patriots, we are friends to American liberty: well, brethren, you yourselves being judges, if your constitution of 1808, and your book of discipline, or the principles of them, were substituted in the place of the constitution of the general or state governments, how much American liberty would remain? You have been aware of this consequence, and have told us again and again, that governments in church and state differ. For myself, I am anxious to establish only one point of resemblance. Let them both go-

vern us as free men, and I am satisfied. But you will not admit a vestige of liberty into the government of the church. The General Conference does not govern the members of the Methodist Episcopal church as free men. And now I warn you, I charge you not to say, that to govern christians as free men is unscriptural. Would not such a declaration be almost blasphemous. I know that you have been loud and unwearied in your praises of discipline; but really this is not to the point. One act of government among free men is of more value than the despotic control of a nation. The wisdom, the perfection, the glory of all government, consists in its adaptation, to the government of free men. But you are not convinced that the principles of your government are despotic. Are not your inward emotions, and your outward attitudes the same as those of despots? Take one example, are not your fears identical with theirs? They are afraid of the people, afraid to trust power in their hands; you are afraid of the members of the church, afraid to trust power in their hands. You have avowed this fear over and over, and you do not limit or qualify it in any manner or way; you are afraid to trust any but yourselves with the right of suffrage. Do the fears of any absolute government exceed this? This rule will work both ways. It is more uniform in its operation than any other. In our country, and in all free countries, the fear is in the people, not in the rulers. The people are afraid to trust too much power to the rulers. This may be relied on in all cases, civil and ecclesiastical. The freedom of men and christians may be tested by the fears which are found to exist in the rulers and the ruled. The greatest tyrants that have ever lived are notorious in history for their fears, and even for their terrors. Hence their body-guards, their standing armies, their fortresses; and hence too their spies and inquisitions; and also the privation of the liberty of the press and of speech.

Brethren, your feelings and your movements are not, and cannot be like the feelings and movements of those who govern free men. In all that pertains to the government of the church you feel, you act like masters, and not like equals. Talk as you may about your sincerity, and your impartiality, &c. still it is but the sincerity and the impartiality of absolute rulers. Do you ask whether sincerity and impartiality are not the same in all men? I answer, all men do not, can not judge alike of their own sincerity and impartiality. Whenever Mr. Asbury was accused of partiality,

his standing reply was, "I am set for the defence of the gospel," meaning the travelling plan; but it so happened that this defence was identical with the defence of the unlimited power which he held for life. He was personally interested in every case of this kind. The same remarks are more or less applicable to every travelling preacher, and every bishop, when their own exclusive power is concerned.

Your fears are all on one side. You are only afraid of the people, but have no distrust, no fear of yourselves. How is this? Are you not men of like passions with them? or is the temptation to err all on their side? It must be granted, that the point of temptation, should be the point of precaution.—And is it so, that the people alone are tempted to destroy the travelling plan? Prove this, and will you not prove that something in this plan must be wrong? Why, upon this hypothesis, what becomes of the eulogy of itinerancy? Have you not praised this ministry for its economy, for its peculiar energy, for a thousand advantages to the church, all of which they receive and enjoy without care or labor; can then the temptation to supercede it fall on them alone? How passing strange. There is not a logician in the world, perhaps, who would not *a priori* infer, that the temptation to destroy the travelling plan, would be felt most strongly by travelling men themselves. These itinerant motions are not of the celestial kind, preachers do not move like planets by centrifugal and centripetal forces; but like bodies in mechanical motion, they are constantly impeded by resistances analogous to gravity and friction: they have as it were a *vis inertiae* to overcome.

Well, brethren, you are not afraid of power in your own hands, it is not worth while now, to enquire how you came to be possessed of it, whether by accident, or by design, or by some affinity between it and your inclinations; but we are to take it for granted, that you, and your successors, will be always duly restrained by a fear of wealth and ease and honor, or we must live under your government, in a state of habitual apprehension, lest you may be induced to employ your power to promote your wealth and ease and honor, and that at our expense. Of course, your power is wrong in principle, it is in a wrong place or country, it will lead to wrong consequences.

I lay it down as an axiom, that the religious liberty of a people should never be reduced in principle, below the standard of their civil liberty. And I think that it will not

be difficult to prove from the New Testament, that in the churches which Paul planted among the gentiles, the principles of religious liberty exceeded the then existing standard of civil freedom : what other construction can be put upon 1. Cor. vi. 1. 8. Certainly if the tribunals of the unbelievers had been more free and equitable, than Paul would have admitted in the church, it would have been an outrage past all endurance, for him to have prevented the brethren from appealing to them for justice.

No. 56.

Mutual Rights, vol. ii. May, 1826, page 236.

Thoughts on Legal Changes and such Matters.

What objection do brethren make to the having of the form of our government so altered, as to admit lay delegates into the General Conference? One of their most weighty objections is, the Methodist discipline will become changed in consequence of such a measure. If there be any truth in this objection, it must be predicated upon example or analogy; but is the example or analogy to be found? was this the fact in regard to the change of the form of government in our country? With us, the form of government was changed from a hereditary monarchy, to an elective republic, and this change was the result of force and compulsion. A war of several years, in which much blood was spilt and passions and prejudices were inflamed to the highest degree, one might suppose would have led the people in whom was the sovereign power, if any thing could have led them, to reject the laws of England as well as its government; and yet they adopted the common law of England, and retained the outlines of its system of jurisprudence. What was there in the English laws worth preserving, which the good people of these states did not preserve? And what laws have the British parliament enacted since our independence, which our government have refused to imitate because they were British? The whole history of changes and revolutions in the forms of government, will go to shew that the tendency in the public mind is to retain ancient laws and customs. Have we not a striking example of this in the Jews who embraced the gospel, who could not be prevailed upon to give up the Levitical ritual, even by apostolical argument and eloquence. In Louisiana and Hayti, not the common law of England,

but the code de Napoleon has been adopted : and it is probable that the Mexican and South American republics, will copy more of their laws from Spain than from France or England. Laws are changed by foreign conquest and emigration, rather than by revolutions or constitutional changes in governments. The old Romans extended their laws by colonization in the conquered countries ; and the barbarians who conquered the empire transplanted themselves and their customs, and thus suspended the Roman laws. Our brethren are no doubt quite serious in believing, that lay delegates will lead to a change in all the rules of discipline, because they cannot conceive how the form of discipline can be maintained without exclusive power in travelling preachers. Their sincerity, however, was equalled by that of the opposers of our national independence, who believed, that with the loss of kingly power the common law of England would be lost forever. They too could not conceive how laws which had been administered for hundreds of years in the name of the king, could be respected and enforced for their own sakes. It was not the majesty of the laws which they revered so much as the majesty of the king. The tendency of all absolute principles of governments, is, to make the ministers of justice, more fearful than justice itself.

It is now forty years since the common law of England has been reduced into practice in this country, without the name of a king, and at this day, the principle of attachment and obedience to the laws in the great body of the people, is quite as strong as it ever was among the English people. Those men who are so confident in their own minds, of the destructive effects of lay delegation upon the discipline, are in duty bound to state to us the mode of the operation. A delegate, it is well known, is the servant of his constituents, and if he betrays his trust, may be left at home, and thus deprived of the power of misrepresentation. Let the question be put to any one among us, in or out of the ministry, opposed to lay delegation ; do you believe that there ever will be a time, when a number of lay delegates may be found in any General Conference, large enough to move together simultaneously, so as to secure a majority of votes against any rule of Methodist discipline ? and will not the answer be in the negative ? The thing is incredible—it is impossible. For if the lay delegates were an actual majority of the General Conference, they could not at any one

election, be all chosen by the members of the church, for the express purpose of changing any old rule, in opposition to the travelling preachers. An attempt to innovate, if made at all by the lay delegates, could only be made at most for the first time by a few, the matter of course would then take wind : and is it to be supposed that the travelling preachers would all sleep, or remain tongue-tied until the next General Conference ? They would have four years to secure a sufficient number of delegates to place themselves in a majority, supposing them not to be a majority on this particular question. But the truth is, that the lay delegates, under the most favorable circumstances, would never be able to out vote the preachers ; and it betrays something worse than inattention, for brethren to urge danger from this quarter. A body of men who have the use of the pulpit, have no great cause to complain of the want of power, for the pulpit itself is an engine of great power.

Are we not borne out in our position, that the same laws may exist under a monarchical and a republican form of government : and in a country which has changed one of these forms for the other ? The example is at home, it is before our eyes. Is there a monarchist, who will stand forth before the American people to prove, that they cannot have, cannot make, or cannot execute as good laws as any monarchy in the universe ? Men may slander and back-bite the republican form of government, but they can produce none more potent in doing good. Let any monarchy exhibit laws better than those we have ; and we will follow the example. But it will be said, that no parallel can be run between a civil and a religious government. Why do not brethren speak out ? Why do they not tell us what they mean ? For really if they mean any thing, it is, that no form of government in the church is right, save the monarchical or the hierarchical one.

It will, however, be asked by way of retort, if the same laws may exist under the two different forms of administration, why a wish should be entertained for a change ? The answer is, that men are not governed by laws or morals only, manners and opinions, are scarcely less influential. The monarchical and the republican forms of government, have their own peculiar manners and opinions : under the most equitable system of laws, manners and opinions may be very inequitable. The agents and ministers of mo-

narchs, whether civil or religious, in passing to and from court like comets, are observed to shine with greater lustre after they pass their perihelion. The governor returns to the province under a new excitement of loyalty. The latent energies of power are wonderfully quickened by royal interviews. The same process is observable under hierarchies; the subordinate agents rise in importance, according to the attention which they receive from above. When it comes to be known, that a reverend gentleman was most graciously received at the spiritual court, will not his respect be increased within and without!

Before our revolution; the governors of the provinces, where the representatives of majesty, and the seats of the provincial governments, were as the court of St. James in miniature. Are not our travelling elders, as the shadow of the wings of the bishops? We are opposed to the manners and the opinions which all absolute principles in church government, have a tendency to produce. It is inherent in the nature of all governments, to beget ambition; for they are the centre-points of power and honor. Instead of rebuking, or encouraging ambition in any society, civil, or religious, we think it should be directed towards the source and fountain-head of liberty. All the power, all the honor, which the people can give, consistently with their rights and liberties, their servants may lawfully seek and enjoy. The ambition of the human heart, can only be matched by the liberties of the people; and the one, is the measure of the other. Is it required to be known how much liberty is necessary under any government; the answer will be, just so much, as to check and control, the ambition of every man, in and out of office. Mr. Wesley had no difficulty, in finding a hundred men, on whom to devolve his power: and Mr. Asbury, though he failed in his council project, found no serious scruples among the preachers, in taking all the law-making power, from the people. How is this to be accounted for? Very easily. If the English and American preachers had been taught to look to the people, for power and honor, not one of a hundred of them, would have taken the crown of supremacy. Alas! for these men, they had been taught to believe that the church was made to be governed, and they were made, for its governors; and their manners have proved to be, not discordant with their opinions. Travelling preachers must be grievously beset with ambition;

they are destined to covet more power, or to fear and tremble for the loss of what they have, until they are taught to respect the power of the church : but then, and not till then, will all their temptation vanish away, like a shadow.

PALEMON.

Volume iii. of Mutual Rights begins August, 1826.

Notice of the expulsion of Reformers in Granville circuit, North Carolina, appears November, 1826.

A convention for Maryland and the District of Columbia, was held in Baltimore, November 15, 16, 1826.

Rev. Mr. Bascom appears again as a writer in December, 1826.

Timothy (the Rev'd George Brown) addresses the Junior Bishop, December, 1826.

No. 57.

Mutal Rights, vol. iii. February, 1827, page 169.

An abridgement of a Sermon, delivered before the Maryland Convention of Reformers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in the English Lutheran Church in Lexington street, Baltimore—by the Rev. NICHOLAS SNETHEN.

"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

Eph. v. 30.

Very important results have been anticipated from the conversion of the Jews to christianity. As this is an event clearly predicted in the New Testament, divines look forward to its accomplishment, as to the final triumph of revelation over infidelity. But it seems to us, that several of the ancient opinions of the Jews are still maintained in our churches ; we therefore calculate upon consequences scarcely less favorable to the internal state of religion, from the conversion of that people, than to the external relations of infidelity. We have thought that we could trace the non-redemption and non-atonement doctrines, so earnestly inculcated by many modern divines, to the Jewish church. The opinions which appear to have prevailed among the Jews, respecting the external and temporal glories of the Messiah's kingdom, cannot, it is evident, be reconciled with those prophecies which relate to his sufferings and

death. It seems doubtful, if it were generally supposed that the Messiah was to die at all; or if it were the prevailing belief that all the legal sacrifices must be perpetuated, proves that little or no redeeming merit was attached to his death. The hopes of the Jews were directed to the actions, and not to the sufferings of their expected deliverer. The preaching of the cross became a stumbling block to them, not merely because that was the instrument of his suffering, but because the preachers contended that his sufferings were necessary, and that there could be no redemption without the merits of his blood. Although the pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead, they did not apply it to the Messiah, or suppose it necessary to his office. The opinions of the twelve disciples were probably identical, with those of their countrymen in general, and we know how they were disconcerted and perplexed when the master began to foretell to them the tragical events which were soon to transpire at Jerusalem. The chief priests and our rulers (said they) delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him; but we trusted that it had been he that would have redeemed Israel. Did they not then trust that he would have redeemed Israel without blood? The resurrection was an event no less unexpected by them: Yea, they add, and certain women also of our company, made us astonished, when they were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he (Christ) expounded unto them, in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself. Now, if the hypothesis that the writers of the New Testament did not mean to inculcate the vicarious sufferings and death of the Messiah, be the true one, what was the point in controversy between them and their Jewish opponents? It seems to us, that it must have been more ideal than real; more about words than things. And we cannot but think, that those who go to Paul for testimony to prove that Christ did not die for our sins, might find more evidence in favor of this opinion in Paul, the disciple of Gamaliel, the pharisee, than in Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ; in Paul, who verily thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, than in Paul who counted all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord; for whom he had suffered the loss

of all things, and did count them but dung, that he might win Christ, and be found in him, not having on his own righteousness, which was of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

The resemblance between our christian hierarchies and the ancient Jewish priesthood, has been pointed out by many writers; and these writers have not failed to shew how much more congenial a hierarchy is, to the outward and temporal glories of an earthly kingdom, than to the kingdom of God which is within us.

Almost all that tenacity of outward forms and ceremonies, and all that prejudice against inward spiritual religion, still characteristic of many christians, may also be traced to the same Jewish source. How could the doctors of the law, with all their previous conceptions of the national glories of the Messiah's reign, comprehend this membership of his body, and his bones?

If then so many of our distinctive opinions have been derived from the Jews, may we not anticipate consequences highly favorable to the cause of truth, in the church from their conversion!

When this people shall be convinced of the inefficacy of the legal sacrifices, and shall say with St. Paul, God forbid that I should glory in any sacrifice, save that which Christ made upon the cross; when they shall exchange all ideas of high priests who are not suffered to continue by reason of death, for the unchangeable priesthood of the tribe of Judah; when they shall say with their evangelical countrymen, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." When the offence of the cross among them shall have ceased, and the preaching of the meritorious sacrifice of the Messiah's death, shall no longer be a stumbling block unto them, will it not cease to appear like foolishness to our modern christian Greeks? With such advocates in favor of the merits of Christ's death, will not his death become the strongest evidence of his divinity? When all Israel shall be saved, and not perhaps till then, may we look for that unity of faith and worship among christians, so much to be desired. From certain analogies that we have observed, it appears to us, highly probable, that the spiritual glories of Christ's kingdom, must be reflected from the Jewish church, before they will be universally realized among gentile christians.

This spiritual or mystic union, between Christ and believers, is called by the apostle a great mystery. And it is evidently inexplicable, upon any system from which the meritorious death and resurrection of Christ is excluded. Indeed, it is called expressly, the marriage of the lamb; but with a dead lamb; with a sacrifice that was annihilated upon the altar, whatever might be supposed to be its merit, there could be no marriage, no spiritual union. How could we become members of such a body; of such flesh and bones? Our mystical union with Christ, consists in the exercise of faith, hope, and love. But if Jesus Christ had not died for our sins; if there were no atoning merit in his blood, he would not be a proper object for the faith of a penitent. The legal sacrifices would be more attractive to a guilty sinner seeking pardon, than a Messiah without merit. But the victim, which expires on the altar to live no more, however strong and lively our faith may have been in him, ceases to challenge our confidence. For every new offence, the law itself provided a new sacrifice, and contemplates that they shall be perpetual, and in succession. No system could be so unreasonable as to require of us an exercise of faith, and hope, and love, in a dead sacrifice. On this point, the author of the epistle to the Corinthians is explicit: "If Christ (says he) be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins."

There is great beauty, tenderness and delicacy, in these allusions of the apostle, to the divine institution of marriage. Our spiritual union is with the risen Messiah, over whom death hath no more dominion; and this union is common to all believers, not peculiar to the ministers or office bearers of the church. But if we are all members of his body, are we not members one of another? Must not this consequence follow of course? Is not a common membership in Christ's body, the true basis of all christian fellowship?

The text may be fairly divided into two separate subjects of consideration.

1. The union of all believers with the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. The union of all believers among themselves. To the first we have already paid some attention. We will now proceed to the second.

As in the first creation, there were benefits conferred on all men, on the whole race, and not on any particular or distinct order of men; so in the new creation, or the cove-

nant of grace, there are blessings common to all believers, and not to any particular part of them. These common blessings, nevertheless, are characteristic, but in a general sense only. They distinguish believers from unbelievers. Man is said to have been made in the image of God. Not that a part of the race was so made, placing the part so distinguished above another part which was not made in his image. Not a few in preference to the many; but all *men* in preference to all other animals. This image or likeness, is moral and intellectual. All christian teachers agree in this, and in excluding from our conceptions of the image of God, every idea of body or parts. As man was appointed to govern—to have dominion, he must needs be supposed to have been created with attributes for that purpose,—to have been created in the image of the great Ruler of all. The authority to govern, without the knowledge how or what to govern, is useless; and without moral principle, it may become mischievous. Now the authority to govern is common to the whole race, and not specially the prerogative of any family or individual. If any one were questioned on this point, were he asked why he presumed to exercise dominion over other animals, would he not refer to the history of the creation? And were he further questioned respecting the origin of his ability to maintain his dominion, would he not again refer to the same high authority? Would he not maintain the superior dignity of his creation? And if he were opposed upon the hypothesis that the divine image belongs not to the whole race, but only to a few favored individuals, would he not contend that it was bestowed upon the universal parent, and is, of course, the common inheritance of all his offspring?

All our divines, who hold that the moral and intellectual powers of man suffered by the fall, agree that they are to be restored by grace. We follow out the analogy, and maintain, that in so far as the lost or effaced image of God is restored by the covenant of grace, it is restored to all believers generally, and not to any special part of them. And we would ask those who monopolize the legislative power of the church, in what the image of God consists in those souls who are thus lorded over by them? Is this image conferred on one order of christians, to make laws for other orders, while they partake of it in common with them? All arguments in favor of equality, must be predicated upon the unity and community of attributes, whether in nature or grace.

As this discourse is primarily intended for the members of this convention, and the professed object of this meeting, is to take measures to petition the General Conference, to obtain a participation in the legislative power, we feel justified in speaking freely and directly upon the subject of ministerial, and ecclesiastical power; should our right be questioned, as members of the church, to meet in this manner and for this purpose, our answer may be supplied by the text; "*We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.*" *We claim the privilege to exercise this right*, because we belong to the general class of believers; because legislative attributes are not an exclusive gift of creation, or of regeneration; and because the ministry of the gospel is not established on the hierarchical principles of the priesthood under the law.

But the fact is, my brethren, that even the priesthood which was under the law, neither claimed, nor exercised any exclusive legislative authority. And in all protestant countries, in which church and state are united, the laity have some share in the law making power, either as subjects or as magistrates. Let it be well considered, that if we are members of Christ's body; if we are citizens of the commonwealth of Israel; if we are of the household of faith; and heirs together, of the same promises, it is no small matter to deprive us of the exercise of one of our most important rights. The church of Jesus Christ is a glorious church. Christ "*loved it, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish.*" The church of Christ is a free church. The Son of God hath made it free indeed. "*Jerusalem which is from above, is the mother of us all.*" "*We are not the children of the bond woman, but of the free.*"

Liberty and equality among believers, is a theme on which apostles delighted to dwell. We cannot mistake their meaning, for they taught that the gospel "*broke down the middle wall of partition—took away the hand writing which was against us, and contrary to us;*" "*that it made of twain one new man, so making peace;*" and that it "*brought those nigh who were sometimes afar off,*" making all believers, of all nations and all conditions "*one in Christ.*"

Here we will read to you the 3d chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians.*

How is it possible to set the privileges of all christians in a stronger point of light. Again, in the fourth chapter, as far as the 16th verse; we will read the whole passage. But to put this mutual and reciprocal relation of all believers, beyond all doubt and contradiction, we will also read the whole of the 12th chapter of 1st Corinthians. Is it not evident to you, that all the diversities of gifts, all the differences of administration, all the diversities of operations, are not only in the same body, the body of Christ, of which we are members; but that the agents and operators themselves belong to this body as members, and not as heads. All the offices, from that of the apostles down, are set in the church, and they are all ministerial. Not one among them is sovereign. But to make laws for men, or for christians without their representatives, is the highest possible act of sovereignty. I know, my brethren, it has been argued that the travelling preachers are indirectly the representatives of the church. But in point of fact and form, the General Conference is placed at a distance, the most remote from the church. All the members of the annual conferences must serve a probation of two years, and undergo three elections of itinerant preachers, and then they elect one seventh part of their own number, to compose a General Conference, together with their presiding bishop, chosen by themselves for life. How church legislators can be more independent of the church, or less accountable to the people, we cannot conceive. If this law making office is ministerial, in relation to the members of the church, then we do not understand the meaning of the word ministerial, and we are no less ignorant of the word sovereign. Do the men who are born, as they believe, to govern those who exist under the political and religious establishment of the eastern "Casts" make a much greater distinction between the rulers and the ruled, than our travelling preachers do, between the rule makers and those for whom the rules are made? Have they not placed a gulph between them, which it is thought almost as impious and presumptuous to attempt to pass, as that between the rich man and Lazarus?

As friends of reform, or advocates for the right of repre-

*Here we necessarily lose much of the fine comment made at the time of delivering the discourse.

sentation in the church, we have been accused of ambition. The most serious charges of this kind have been urged against your speaker. Some have said, that he aspires after the highest offices. How little, my brethren, do these men know of my views of the dignity of the christian calling? How little do they understand the value I attach to the relation I hold to my Redeemer as a member of his body, &c. How insignificant is the title of bishop, or arch-bishop, in my estimation, when compared with that of king and priest unto God? My brethren, I am not conscious of any higher ambition than this. The greatest dignity and distinction I can conceive of, I have in common with you and with all believers. Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Head, hath loved us, and washed us from our sins, in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.

And now brethren, I declare to you, that there is no one action of my life, upon which I have reflected more deliberately, than the taking a part in this convention, and there is no one among them, within my recollection, of which I find a more conscientious approval in my own breast. That I am acting up to my privilege and my duty, and not beyond them, I have no doubt. As a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ; as a christian, not to say a minister, I am fully persuaded in my own mind, that I have a right to be present, personally, or by my representative, in the law making department of the church, of which I am a member.

The office of a representative, in a legislative body is strictly ministerial. The man that is sent is not greater than the sender. While the church is legislated for without its representatives, to say the least of it, it is in its nonage, and is under tutors and governors. The danger of this state of things can no more be concealed, than the humiliation. We look in vain among absolute legislators for those sympathies and fellow feelings, so finely described in the 12th of 1st Corinthians. The whole history of this monopoly goes to prove, that when men make laws for themselves and others, if their own interests and the interests of those for whom they legislate come in collision, the former prevails over the latter. God knows, and every body knows, how much misery and calamity have been entailed on the church and the world, by the exclusive legislation of priests; and while human nature continues true to itself, we have no reason to expect that it will be otherwise. Concerning the operations and the effects of the power of our own General

Conference, we could say much; but lest we might, by the strength of our excitements, be tempted to speak unadvisedly with our lips, we have habitually restrained our feelings, and we restrain them now. We know, that government is necessary to the peace and well being of every community; and happy will it be for those who administer the government of any church, if when the master shall come to call them to account, they shall be found in the capacity of servants, and not of lords of God's heritage.

No. 58.

Mutual Rights, vol. iii. March, 1827, pp. 181, 184, 186, 239.

Reflections by Spectator, in four numbers.

No. 1.

Our old side men conceive, that an opposition to representation gives them a title to all that is primitive and Wesleyan in Methodism. And I feel persuaded in my mind, that if Mr. Wesley were now living in the United States, in the existing state of the Methodist Episcopal Church, he would have no objection to the extension of the principle of representation to the members of the church. Mr. Wesley has left behind him the most abundant evidence, that he was governed by circumstances; or in other words, that he suffered himself to be instructed by unforeseen events. Lay preachers, and itinerancy, and class meetings, and ordinations for America, were predicated on unforeseen events. The present state of the Methodist Episcopal Church was not foreseen,—not anticipated by him. He opposed suffrage and representation in the members of his society, it is true; but how could he have done otherwise and been consistent with himself, unless he had granted them to the preachers also? While he put nothing to vote among the preachers in the conferences, it was not to be expected that the private members should be permitted to vote. Mr. Wesley blamed his general superintendents, for allowing the American preachers to vote. And it is due to Mr. Asbury to acknowledge, that though he was the first to offend, and thus procured his own election, he did all he could, to render the practice null and void. The council-plan will forever remain a proof of this. But finding that nothing short of the right of suffrage and representation, would satisfy the

preachers, he granted the principle and yielded to its operation, as far as it regarded them. Before these events, Mr. Wesley's name had disappeared from the American minutes, and he was no longer numbered among the living. I was ignorant of Mr. Asbury's sentiments, about a representative General Conference, when I broached the subject to him. We discussed the subject between ourselves, and it was agreed, that I should support it in the General Conference. The motion, however, was lost by a large majority; and when it was carried, (1808,) I was no longer a member of the General Conference. I will not take upon me to say, that Mr. Asbury had not the plan in his own mind, when I first made known to him my thoughts on the subject. It is enough to know, that it was not his first plan, to have any General Conference. The same may be said, of the manner of trying members; it was not Mr. Wesley's; it was not his American superintendants'; it did not obtain in the General Conferences of 1792 nor 1796.

Mr. Wesley innovated in principle, and practice; so did his general superintendants, in this country; and so have the General Conferences. It is of no consequence, to say, that Mr. Wesley never granted lay representation; for he did not allow the itinerant preachers a suffrage, in the choice of men or measures. The question is, if he had granted the principle to itinerant preachers, would he have restricted it to them, to the exclusion of the local preachers and the laity? I think he would not, for the same reason that he granted it to neither. Moreover, it is well known, that the refusal of the right of suffrage to the preachers and members by Mr. Wesley, as well as many other peculiarities in his economy, was predicated on his and their relation to the church of England; the national church, of which the king was the head. But in the present entire state of independence of the Methodist Episcopal Church, none of Mr. Wesley's fears of separation, &c. can have any place.

Now it is evident, to my mind, from the manner of speaking and writing, among old side men, that they seem not to be aware of the fact, that the General Conference itself, has conceded and sanctioned the principle of representation; and that they cannot refuse it to the church, now, on any other ground than that of mere arbitrary power. So little do they reflect on this matter, that they do not suspect it to be incumbent on them, to produce Mr. Wesley's authority for the present organization of the General Conference, be-

fore they can make it purely and exclusively Wesleyan. If the itinerant preachers in this country, had asked Mr. Wesley to grant them the right of suffrage and representation, he might have answered, that it would introduce new principles into Methodism. Did they ask, did they petition even the father of Methodism himself? They did not; and, so far from it, when he sent them another superintendant, they not only rejected him, but in an uncerimonious manner, dispensed with the old patriarch's name itself. We should have high times, if new side men, should do with the names of the present bishops, as the itinerant preachers once did with the name of John Wesley, A. M. There is a story, in the bible, of ancestors, who slew the prophets, and their successors who garnished their sepulchres. Is there any resemblance between that case and the eulogies of the venerable name, by the men, who are reaping the precious fruits of the acts of those who procured its erasure from the American minutes? When American itinerant preachers desired to vote, they did not send all the way to England to obtain leave. Well, what reason do they give why laymen should not vote with them? Why forsooth, dear, good old Mr. Wesley was not willing that laymen should vote. Ah! but he was not willing that itinerant preachers should vote, and yet they did vote themselves independent of him, and continue to this day to vote independent of every body else.

Old side brethren seem to feel the greatest self-complacency, in supposing that they are for all the world like Mr. Wesley. But suppose that new side men should attempt to imitate the actions of Mr. Wesley in some striking points. Why may not they, as well as Mr. Wesley, preach out of doors, if they are shut out of the churches? Why may they not like him, too, build houses, raise congregations, have stationed and itinerant preachers, make collections, and even ordain, &c.? Will the mere accidental circumstance, that their object is representation, destroy all resemblance between his conduct and theirs? When Mr. Wesley found, that a lawful thing was expedient, he would not refuse to do it. May not good examples be followed? Is it not both lawful and expedient, to save even "a few local preachers and laymen? St. Paul seemed to think so, when he became all things to all men. When Mr. Wesley refused to let his preachers and members vote, he said he did them no wrong as they held their old church relation. But this is not true

of the members of other churches who join the Methodist Episcopal Church, they lose their religious suffrage and representation. Is it expedient, is it wise, to place over the doors of a church, as a motto, NO SUFFRAGE—NO REPRESENTATION HERE! Some it is true, may "*stipulate*" to come in under these conditions, and thus gain the right of *non-resistance and passive obedience*; but numbers of others surely will not.

No. II.

A story has gotten into circulation, that the Rev. Enoch George, bishop (one of the bishops) of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in a late visit to the banks of the Potomac, having come from the northern province of Methodism;—for, like mother church, we have two episcopal provinces. The story is, that brother George;—I mean not, to write and publish what I please, but what I hear;—the bishop was pleased to say, that, so long as he can find twelve itinerant preachers to join him, he will resist lay delegation; or words to that effect. Could he do so without making a division in the church? And this is one of the men to whom the reformers are going to petition. It may stand thus on the journal of the General Conference:—Bishop George in the chair—a petition was presented and read, praying for lay representation, &c. &c. No matter, it seems, by what arguments the petition may be urged—no matter how many laymen may be in favor of it—no matter how many bishops and itinerant preachers vote for it;—if Mr. George can find twelve itinerant preachers, we may expect to see "the non-jurors" acted over again. This, to be sure, might be all right, in a bishop and twelve itinerant preachers. But the rule would not work both ways, for if local preachers and laymen should do likewise, no one would complain more loudly than brother George.

When the old mysteries were celebrated, the prophets used to cry out, "procul, O procul!" &c. that is, hence, far hence, O ye profane! meaning the uninitiated. Are there any mysteries and secrets in the General Conference, with which laymen may not be entrusted? From the extreme aversion of some old side men, to lay representation, one is almost tempted to suspect, that they view it as a sort of sacrilege.

Now if the time had not gone by, for one to wonder at any thing in man, I should wonder at this expression in

my old friend. I want no stronger proof of the importance of lay delegation, than this case of the dear old man himself. There is real danger on this vast continent, of men travelling themselves wild, quite wild. You see here, gentle reader, a specimen of itinerant ideas; and did you ever see any thing more extravagant, more ridiculous? This said brother George, is by nature, one of the most cautious and modest of men. Indeed we used to complain that he was timid to excess; and now what a transformation! He makes no secret of a mighty purpose, of fighting against lay representation, with twelve men. It would be an entertaining spectacle, to see the free, sovereign, and independent citizens and church men of our country, renouncing all their claims to religious suffrage and representation, and flying to bishop George and his twelve apostles, to place themselves as mutes, under their government. Ah the good man's notions have become too itinerant, too despotic. The presence of local men in the General Conference, with their local ideas, would no doubt have prevented this. I know, indeed, some local preachers and some lay members, who have made no secret of their purpose, to leave the church, if lay representation should ever obtain. But this is not strange. Some men are born with an inherent propensity to pander to power. The elements of liberty, minister no genial excitement to them. But Enoch George is no flatterer; on men in power he never fawns. The time was, when our spirits felt kindred, and we interchanged the sweet sentiments of liberty. O! how it grieves me, to hear of his bitter enmity to the good cause. How could I have believed, that my friend would have refused to others, *that*, which is so dear to himself;—*that* palladium of every man's freedom—the sacred right of suffrage. When he suffered from the authority of men in power, and complained of its insolence, I sympathised with him. One effect of this contest, it seems, is certain; it will serve to develop the principles of men; the inherent love of power; and the love to flatter it, will be found where we least expected. It will be demonstrated how much itinerant power has done for the cause of liberty among our countrymen.

If report has misrepresented Mr. George's words or sentiments, I should rejoice to find it so. The pages of the *Mutual Rights* are open for his vindication. But if he be still as much as ever opposed to the principles of lay representation, whether he avows it or not, he will find in me, at

all times, a firm, inflexible, though not ungenerous, opponent. The principles of this controversy, as one of our co-workers expresses it, run deep into christianity.

Brother George has fallen into the common error of estimating these matters by numbers, and in numbers he feels secure. My reliance, from the beginning has been upon principle. When I first began to write, I had but one colleague. Why will not brother George, why will not all our opponents, reflect upon the march of principle? Opposition, to the cause of representation, will melt away in the General Conference itself. The men who believe, do not make haste. The light of truth is progressive. It is passion that is always in a hurry. The advancement of the cause of reform, has all the marks of the advancement of truth; it is like those clouds which raise themselves aloft against the under current of air.

No. III.

In our two first numbers, we have shewn that Methodists are not accustomed to yield a favorite principle, to scruples of conscience about church matters. We have seen Mr. Wesley, his superintendants, the American itinerant preachers, bishop George, and old side men, ready to put the unity of church in jeopardy, when matters approach to a crisis. Examples are contagious. The example in this case, goes to make circumstances yield to opinions, or become subservient to them. If even Mr. — himself, (we shall have his name bye and bye) will leave the church, should a lay delegation be granted, can he object, if the advocates for the principle should do any thing short of this, in the event of their disappointment? Many of our brethren, as is commonly the case, are cautious and timid. Their opponents will teach them courage; and courage will procure them friends. The declaration of a bishop, which we alluded to in our preceding number, will be heard and read with much interest, by many who have heretofore let the subject pass, without going into the merits of it. Laymen will be led to examine the grounds of this distinction, between itinerant preachers and themselves. How great will be their surprise, to find that the exclusive suffrage and representation of itinerant preachers, are both of their own creation. Hitherto the main point in discussion has been ordination; and it is well known, that several of the churches in this

country, do not, to this day, acknowledge the validity of ordination, even amongst itinerant preachers; and consider them all, from the bishop to the deacon, as nothing more than lay preachers. And yet, heedless of all this, these men are flaunting their clerical powers and prerogatives in the faces of laymen; there is an indiscretion in this conduct, which cannot be vindicated. Is nothing due to the members of the church, from men to whom they have adhered under all their discouragements? The clergymen who have no fellowship with them, would take any of our laymen into their churches and restore to them the right of suffrage.

But this matter will be passed by, and the members of the church will meet their itinerant preachers on other ground. They will prove to them, they will demonstrate to them, that Mr. Wesley, though he gave them ordination, never gave them suffrage, never gave them representation. They will demand of them, by what authority, human or divine, they exclude laymen from the General Conference? And in the sequel, this question will be found to assume an importance, greater than any connected with the history of Methodism. Our leading men are blinded; they are infatuated, not to say intoxicated with their own imaginary consequence. They will know, when it may be too late, their best friends. At no distant day, many a bitter regret will be felt that this discussion was provoked; and the only refuge and safety of the church, will be found in lay representation. But there are a few more floating straws for the drowning men to catch at. And besides, all eyes are now turned towards Dr. —'s book. From that learned and profound divine, considering the lights he has to aid him, much indeed is to be expected and much to be feared. One thing, gentle reader, is certain; his erudite labors will give the subject greater publicity. The attention of the Methodist public and the American public, will be more and more turned towards lay representation, and it will, finally, be regarded as inferior only in interest, to our political franchise itself. A people circumstanced as we have been, are not only below public notice, but almost below public contempt. What would America have been in the estimation of nations, had she quietly taken on the yoke of taxation. It was by reviving the great question of representation that she not only raised herself to distinction, among the nations, but afforded them new lights to guide

them in the path of liberty. The book to which we have alluded, we have reason to believe, has been considerably circulated in manuscript; we have heard from second and third hands, much eulogy on it. The distinguished author, it is said, thinks that our success would have been greater, if we had had less of flesh and blood to contend against and more of intellect. Now I can assure him of one thing as it regards myself, individually; if I know any thing of my own heart, I have not too much pride nor prejudice, to be convinced by him, and that is saying much, as he knows full well, that he has not been sparing in means to rouse and aggravate both. But so sure as his book shall prove to be in any measure, as I expect it will be, let him look out for something more than "visionary theories."

If his book cannot be answered, I will be among the first to proclaim him victor;—if it can be, he must prepare to pay up all old arrears due to the cause of reform. The cause is great, and the stake is great. This brother at arms has the advantage "of sun and wind." The ground has been familiar to him from the beginning. He has been in our citadel, and is acquainted with our camp. If he means to spring a mine, his leisure and security in preparing it has been ample. The choice of his weapons and of the time, the place, and manner of attack, are all his own. Every eye, therefore, it may be presumed, will be turned to the issue of the mighty contest of ink and paper.

No. IV.

Our complaint of Dr. — is on an old score. The press is free: let him, if he pleases, publish what he writes. If he can confute reformers, his friends will do well to avail themselves of the fruit of his pen. And though itinerant preachers might shut him out of the General Conference, (were he to petition,) I commend them for letting him write for them, if he can write better than they can. We may not anticipate his book; but as his name is among the "*under-signed*," is there not reason to suspect that the item about the missionary character, &c. holds some conspicuous place in it. We have the names of twenty-four brethren for it, that lay representation must necessarily destroy this character.

The idea of missionary character is not new. A good name is better than precious ointment: or to use a more

homely adage, "When a man's name is up, he may go to bed." So we have missionaries, and our ministry has a missionary character; but the office and the character do not necessarily meet in the same persons. A B and C have not been on the saddle bags for ten years; and, like the mitred man of the poet, they may have "gone to kennel ne'er to bark again" as missionaries; and yet their missionary character, must remain entire. How is this! So here is the demonstration! Their missionary character, cannot necessarily be destroyed, unless lay representatives are admitted into the General Conference. It were to be wished, that it were consistent with the dignity of the office of the twenty-four grand jurors, to condescend to explain to us the mode of operation; but as it is not, we must be contented with their assertion. Must the ministers of the gospel, necessarily cease to go from one station to another, if the members of the church are represented in the legislature of the church, or in other words, must the ministers of the gospel cease to travel circuits, unless the legislative and executive power over the church, remains exclusively in their own hands?

Suppose the American itinerant preachers had been about to petition Mr. Wesley, to let them vote in conference, and twenty-four brethren, in the Baltimore station, had opposed them, because, if Mr. Wesley should allow them to vote, they must necessarily vote his name out of the American minutes, and so annihilate his authority over them. Now although they did in fact vote his name out of the minutes, what would the world think of such logic as this! Who but a necessitarian would think of arguing for the necessity of the consequence.

In our conference matters, some order has sprung out of confusion. No period of the same duration in the history of any church, exhibits such a jumble of powers as ours did from 1784 to 1792. Since the latter date, the departments and the powers began to be defined, and a representative General Conference was organized under six restrictions. It is now distinctly understood that the business of this body, with the exception of its appellate jurisdiction is exclusively legislative. This is the only example of the kind in the whole history of Methodism. And it is thus that the way is fairly prepared for lay representation. If all business were done as in England, in one conference, and as it was in the numerous and ever changing little district conferences before 1792; or if the General Conferences

were composed of all the itinerant preachers or elders, as they were from 92 to 1808, great difficulties would be against lay representation. But in the General Conference, as its powers are now defined, executive, and other business cannot interfere with the legislative powers and prerogatives of the lay representatives. As we have said again and again, no new principle will be required, but merely the extension of those principles already in operation. No part of the business of the annual conferences would be interfered with. Those not immediately concerned would not perceive the change in our economy, and there is reason to believe, that the mutual confidence, which would be thus restored might prove so great, that for a series of years, the laity would think it hardly worth while to send representatives. In the consciousness that they have the shield of their protection at their command, they would probably repose securely on it, while no attempt should be made to infringe upon their rights.

But how the missionary character of our ministry must necessarily be destroyed by the presence of lay representatives, we are utterly unable to conceive; unless the brethren suppose it will be done by contact or contagion. Do they suppose the itinerant preachers by associating with laymen, would as it were, lose "CAST," or that "evil communications will corrupt their good manners." Have they in their eye the maxim "A man is known by the company he keeps." Will the presence of lay representatives in the General Conference "defile that holy place."

Methodist missionaries bear little resemblance to itinerant preachers. They are volunteers, not bound to go to the missionary stations, as the latter are to their circuits; not dependant upon the station for their support. In England, it should seem, that very few of the old preachers in full connexion, go out as missionaries. These recruits are mostly from the local and probationary ranks. And if laymen are kept out of the General Conference, I anticipate, that in the course of time, it will be so here. The men who can move their families from one furnished house to another once in two years, along turnpike roads, or in steam boats, will hardly manifest an extreme proneness to go to the Rocky Mountains and South America. Query. Did the brethren perceive some synonymy between missionary characters and pastoral power? Even the latter will not necessarily be destroyed by lay representation.

No. 59.

Mutual Rights, vol. III. May, 1837, page 248.

An Address to the friends of Reform—by N. SNETHEN.

DEAR BRETHREN,

You have heard of what was done in the bounds of the Virginia conference; and will hear of the proceedings of the Baltimore annual conference, in the case of Dennis B. Dorsey. I notice this last case as proof of the fact, that the itinerant preachers have taken a stand against reform, or representation, which must change our relation to them. We are no longer to consider ourselves as standing upon the open and equal ground of argument with those brethren in behalf of a principle; but as the supporters of what we conceive to be truth and right, opposed by power. From the beginning, I have considered the avoiding of written discussion by almost all the itinerant preachers on the old side, as ominous of this issue, and have not ceased to anticipate the time when a display of the plenary powers in their hands would in effect place us as lambs among wolves, and call upon us to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves."

I understand the text in its original application, "I send you forth as lambs among wolves," that is, with truth and right, among those who have both the power and disposition to resist your principles and to destroy you, but I give you no means of self defence, but the wisdom of the serpent, tempered with the harmlessness of the dove. We have all along asserted, that there is power enough in the rulers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, to excommunicate us all, and we are still of the same opinion; but if any one should doubt it, let him remember, that the body of men of whom we mean to ask for a fish, may give us a scorpion; that the very General Conference of 1828, may make rules, if they conceive they are not already made, to reach every reformer.

Our relation I say was changed in point of fact, from the day the power of the itinerant preachers waked into action. The most distinguished preacher who should advocate the principle of representation would find himself obnoxious to power, as well as the least member in the church. No man among us has power to oppose to power; and truth or right in the mouth of a minister would not lose its lamb-like helplessness, when assailed by the power of a majority of itine-

rant preachers. This majority have all the claws and all the teeth, and therefore, every man may be made to fear.

This fact, brethren, we ought not by any excitement of zeal, to lose sight of for a moment. I therefore repeat it, truth or right in the grasp of power, is like lambs among wolves. Hitherto reformers have spoken and written freely and openly, they have had no secrets, the wisdom of the serpent was not necessary. The charge of imprudence and the general cast of all the objections brought against them, goes to shew, that power was not roused, that the prey though within reaching distance, was not seized. Henceforth the character and conduct of Methodists must rapidly change. On the side of power there will be fierceness, and on the side of right concealment. Threatenings and suspicions will mightily prevail. A name has already been demanded, not I presume to satisfy curiosity, or to confute arguments, but for punishment, or at least impeachment.

Heretofore it is doubtful if a single travelling preacher has written for the Wesleyan Repository or the Mutual Rights, who was not known to his superiors. The writers themselves often confided their proper names to their brethren, and so they felt not like lambs among wolves; but a few examples in the annual conferences will put an end to this kind of generous rivalry. Travelling preachers themselves will be thus painfully taught the wisdom of the serpent—taught to elude power by policy. What a temptation will this prove to trespass upon the innocence of the dove? Brother Dorsey, it seems, was advised by his friends (in this advice I did not participate,) not to answer any question which might criminate himself. This refusal to answer questions, this putting the conference upon the proof of his guilt, made a part of his offence. Who then did he thus offend? No one but the members of the annual conference. Now mark brethren, the importance of this whole transaction: not to brother Dorsey merely, but to us all. Let this procedure be established as a precedent, and of what avail will the maxim of our Master be to us? How can we maintain the harmlessness of the dove? How escape the jaws of power without dissimulation? Surely if we have no right to keep our own secrets among those who make a man an offender for a word, we have no means of self preservation, but in the unqualified wisdom of the serpent. Brother Dorsey by a vote of the annual conference, is deprived of a station for one year. Will either of these voters feel any

twitches or qualms of conscience in treating either of us relatively in the same way, if we refuse to answer and to promise as they may please, and punish us for contumacy, or contempt of court? And that too, while in our courts of law no man is required to answer any question which goes to criminate himself. If brother Dorsey were imprisoned or banished for one year, by an annual conference for contumacy, all the state of Maryland would be up in arms. The sound of the outcry of the deed would reach the ends of the earth. Persecution! would be re-echoed in all directions; and yet, in case either of imprisonment or banishment, he might preach quite as much in the capacity of a travelling preacher as these brethren intend he shall in this case. The truth is, brethren, that there is the very essence of persecution in this act of the Baltimore annual conference. As a precedent, it deprives us of our last, our only resort to defend ourselves against power, which we can employ consistently with our christian character. Is not punishment for telling the truth and a reward for dissimulation, in effect, the same? I know brethren, that we shall be accused of party spirit and party purposes, in espousing the cause of this brother, but it is not so; by this dispensation we are sent forth as lambs among wolves, power has usurped authority over truth; *we are not to be reasoned with, but punished*. In this new condition, what are we to do? We must go to the New Testament for direction and instruction; and there we learn, that we must be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Must we not then espouse the principle, and can we do this without espousing the cause of the first martyr of it in the Baltimore annual conference? Your turn, my turn, may come next. It is an awful thing to be driven by the power of a majority from the last asylum of harmlessness—to be reduced to the dreadful alternative of dissimulation or bearing witness against one's self.

On the critical situation of brother Dorsey's health, passing from his bed to the conference for several days, in which he was kept in painful suspense, I shall not enlarge; for though these circumstances may have produced a crisis in his disease, though his death may be thus accelerated, even this would be a small matter compared with the consequences of this principle as it relates to the souls of men, this sin against the brethren. It is not to your sympathies that I am addressing myself; but to the sacred regard which

I hope and trust, you feel for this vital principle of all human society. Let the wolf of authority, the unrelenting majority, either in church or state, leave to us a harmless silence, let them not compel us to bear witness against ourselves, and the wisdom of the serpent may shield us, may yet enable us, in the enjoyment of a good conscience, to elude their death-grasp.

I deem it proper, brethren, that in this portentous change, in this state of your affairs, that you should hear my voice, should see my name. It will, I know it will, it must be asked, now the time is come to try men's souls, where is Philo Picticus? Where is Adynasius? Where is Senex? Where is the man who was among the foremost to challenge us to the cause of representation? Where is Snethen? I trust that while he is among the living, but one answer will be given to this question—he is at his post, he is in the front of the contest, he is shouting *on*, brethren on! and if he fall, it will be with a wound in his breast, and with his head direct towards the opponent.

It is the command of the great Captain of our salvation, that we may not hurt even a hair on the head of those who hold the power to hurt us, even by the wisdom of the serpent. We may not lie, even for the glory of God; but we may be silent, we may leave those in ignorance whom we know will not only not see, but punish those who offer to give them light. The old side men have done a strange thing in the earth: they have placed themselves *hors du combat*; they have even done more, they have tempted us to smite them in the back, to aim invisible strokes at them—to conspire for their overthrow. Let us not avail ourselves of the advantages which their folly or want of foresight has given us! But I call upon you by every sacred name, to resist this inquisitorial power, this attempt to renew in America, the old, the exploded principle of torture, this monstrous outrage upon the principles of civil and religious liberty;—the punishing of men for not submitting to criminate themselves. O defend to the last extremity, this final sanctuary of oppressed innocence. What may not the traitor to this cause expect? Where can he find shelter from the frowns of Heaven and earth, and the self torture of his own reflections.

Of the labor of seven years, I make no account. I was not a lamb among wolves. My courage, my resolution was not put to the test. I have never been questioned, never

called to account, not even threatened. The fiery trial has come upon one who is as the shadow of a man, a walking skeleton, and I yet go free! Mysterious providence! Thank God, the afflicted man's soul is in health, his fortitude is unimpaired by disease, he has the courage and the constancy of a martyr: Lord, let the young man live and not die! Let not the wife of his youth be a premature widow. I cannot now desert the cause and be innocent before God or man. I cannot now be silent and be harmless. I therefore advertise you of the change, and earnestly entreat you to conform to it by conforming to the directions of the Master, "Be ye, therefore, wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." Your affectionate fellow laborer in the great cause of church representation.

N. SNETHEN.

Mutual Rights, vol. iv. begins with August, 1827. Dr. S. K. Jennings, chairman of the editorial committee.

Trials of the Baltimore reformers begin September, 1827.

No. 60.

Mutal Rights, vol. iv. October, 1827, page 97.

Remarks on Dr. Bond's Dedication—by N. SNETHEN.

Dr. Bond in his rhetorical manner, tells me, that I was misinformed respecting the time when he began to write. I make no remark on his seeming play upon the word "book," &c. It may be, there was an error of inference on my part. He says, he "was conscious of having signified an intention of writing in defence of our church polity." Possibly he might have told what he intended to write so often, and so circumstantially, as to give rise to the supposition, that he had written as well as intended to write. My informants did not use the words "book" and "manuscript," but the impression made upon my mind was, that his admired arguments were written. It is considered among us preachers to be of no consequence, whether a sermon is preached before it be written or afterwards. Doctor Bond's Appeal, may indeed, have been first talked into existence.

Is it not evident that he sought an occasion against me? Am I not warranted in the opinion, that if he had not found the quotations which he has given from the answer to O'Kelly, I should not have been honored with a dedication?

Query, if the dedication was now about to be written, would the same pains be taken to shew the author's delicacy, and to display the wound which my compliment to the profundity of his genius had given to his feelings? Would not a comparison between the dedication and the Appeal indicate, that the former must have been written first; or, that its humility must have been voluntary? The Appeal throughout, is written as from the chair (*ex cathedra*.) If the writer was not conscious that he was a "profound divine;" or if he be now conscious that he is scarcely out of his novitiate, how incautious, how injudicious have his admirers been in trumpeting his praise. Is there less danger in flattering novices than in promoting them? 1 Tim. iii. 6. No pope, no bishop, no doctor, no professor within my knowing, writes with a greater air of assurance than doctor Bond. His manner should be called *Bond-ism*, and his proselytes *Bond-men*. The feeling which he has transfused into his composition, or which his writings transfuse into the breasts of his admirers, is calculated to produce a change in the moral character of the ministry and the church; and will do it, unless it shall be most steadfastly resisted. Never before, have I seen, in these United States, such a demonstration of the spirit of persecution. And I cannot behold without alarm, the proofs of the predisposition, or affinity for it, which are daily manifesting themselves. What a fearful attitude of teeth and under lips, has this fatal Appeal already produced! These men do not see their own faces; they hold reformers in too great contempt to practise concealment, and they are too confident in the divinity of doctor Bond's inspiration to give place to reflection: the color of the countenance, and the position of the muscles of the face, to say nothing of the tones of the voice and the meaning of words, in these cases, cannot therefore, be misunderstood.

His dedication to me makes a great display of words about my military figures, the "citadel," "the camp," and "the mine," &c. But before he has done with the Appeal, the secret leaks out. At one time, it seems, he had no objection to the election of presiding elders, but now all the epithets in use against reformers, were then applied to those who were in favor of the presiding elder bill. And even more; it was whispered to us, that in those days, one bishop went so far as to call another "traitor." I say now, what I meant last March. The reformers did once consider doctor

Bond as worthy of their confidence, and in writing against us, if he knew of any secret designs among us, we expected that he would publish them all; and I thus meant to set at nought the reports of secret designs, &c. Well he has published his book, let us now hear him, "whatever I may have suspected, I never knew until now, that you had any secret designs in your camp," &c. Does he indeed know it now? How then did he obtain the knowledge? Does not what follows to the end of the section, savor more of the language of deception than of dedication? Doctor Bond must pardon me. I can just as soon believe that he is a fool, as believe that "in sober seriousness" he meant that what I had published in No. 32, had apprized him that I and "my friends are engaged in a secret conspiracy against the church."

But "in sober seriousness" he tells me, that he was not aware of having done any thing to alarm my "pride," or to excite my "prejudice." Did I say that my pride was alarmed, or my prejudice excited? In describing the characters of reformers to men who were strangers to me, he tells them that I am the most visionary theorist of them all. He is not aware that this is "too hard striking," or that the stroke hurts me. But "perhaps" he says, "the real cause of your wrath may be found in a remark which I have already quoted." "Perhaps" it may not; "perhaps" I was not wroth; what evidence did I give to doctor Bond that so hateful and diabolical a passion had any place in my breast? Be assured gentle reader, that I felt no wroth, that I feel none now, and that I had counted the cost of the controversy too well, not to be apprised, that, all manner of evil would be written as well as said of me, for representation's sake. And by the grace of God I had determined, and I still determine, not to give place to wrath, though I should be turned out of the synagogue.

We come now to O'Kelly matters. At the General Conference of 1800, Mr. Asbury presented a mass of materials and documents, which he had prepared and collected as an answer to Mr. O'Kelly's "Apology." The conference were not eager to accept them. But near the close of the session, Philip Bruce, George Roberts, and Nicholas Snethen, were chosen as a committee, with powers to compose such an answer as they might think proper, from the papers furnished by Mr. Asbury. It was not Mr. Asbury then, but the General Conference who made choice of me as the *last*

member of the committee, and the youngest. To this choice Mr. Asbury did not object, though he well knew that I was what is now called a new-side man. My colleagues devolved the labor of the compilation or abridgement upon me, and in this humble task, I think it likely that I made much of the language my own, but how much I could not now tell; for I have not seen either of the pamphlets these twenty-seven years. But the leading ideas in the quotation, I am persuaded, I spake not of myself. Young men were then taught, as they are now, if not that "might is right," that success is truth. The reader may perceive that in those days, young writers, scarcely out of their novitiate, were quite as flippant in the use of the arguments drawn from our success, as they are in these days; and that so far, doctor Bond's book is not a new thing under the sun. What St. Paul says of himself "when I was a child, I thought as a child, I spake as a child," is true of all children in understanding.

The reader will please to bear in mind, that Mr. O'Kelly withdrew from the General Conference and from the connexion, in the year 1792, so that he had in 1800, been separate from, and independent of the Methodist Episcopal Church, eight years; and that in consequence of the real or apprehended attempts to induce the members of the classes to go over to him, what is called the gag law, was passed. But why did Mr. O'Kelly first leave the connexion? Because that in a trial of strength upon his favorite appeal, he and his friends were found in the minority. The question of lay representation was not before the General Conference, the question was, simply, whether a travelling preacher should have an appeal to the conference of travelling preachers from the appointment of the bishop. In 1800, I lent the aid of my pen, to stop the progress of a separation from the church; in 1821, I did the same, as may be seen in the first volume of the Wesleyan Repository, particularly in the November No., under the head of "*The State of our Affairs.*" In 1827, I continue to do the same. I now not only advise the friends of reform not to separate from the church, but I warn, and caution, and entreat doctor Bond, and all who are baptized into his spirit, not to turn men out of the church, because they mean to petition the General Conference to grant them a representation, for this may lead to a final separation.

Doctor Bond, in his dedication, has misrepresented me; he has misrepresented my friends, and he has misrepresented the state of facts. I am innocent of the revolutionary principles and projects, he has laid to my charge. I am utterly unable to comprehend how he could ever have gotten his own consent to write the following: "I still wait with painful anxiety, to see the result of the desperate game you are playing; you can never reform the church after your fashion, but, you may rend it, and have cause after, to lament your fatal success. Among those who, in the dismemberment of the church, will follow in your train, there may be, and probably will be many good men, 'wrong in their opinions, but right in their sentiments;' but there will also follow those turbulent, discontented spirits, who are impatient of all control; and all those who are against our discipline because our discipline is *against them*." I cannot for the life of me, see any fitness or application in writing thus, save to the quotation which is made to follow it. I really have no more concern in this kind of matter than the man in the moon. The writer must have been dreaming when he wrote "I saw you climbing the steep and slippery ascent to revolutionary distinction." Don't turn me out of the pulpit, doctor Bond, don't turn me and my friends out of the church, and I will prove to you, and to the world, that if you had no worse intention in writing thus, you must have intended to show how well you could write.

I said truly and sincerely of this expected publication, what I say of all possible ones. I am open to conviction, let me be confuted, and I will be the first to proclaim the victor. But what is there in this appeal to convince me? I declare that I see nothing new in it. For upwards of thirty years I have been as familiar with all doctor Bond's axioms and arguments as with my alphabet. I am surprised when I hear of travelling preachers of some standing, professing to be convinced by this appeal. How little must these men know of the history of opinions among their own fraternity. "The voluntary association, and the indefeasible right to withdraw" are not only worn threadbare, but torn to tatters. It will be well if it is not yet made to appear, that they involve a damnable heresy. Have the members of the church an indefeasible right to withdraw from the head of the church? If this writer will convince reformers, that they can withdraw from the church, without

withdrawing from its head, "perhaps" apart of their repugnance to such a step may be overcome. As a writer against the principles of reform, doctor Bond is not to be feared; but as a writer against reformers, he is to be dreaded. Upon principles, he soon gets out of his depth; upon men, he is quite at home. I envy not, I emulate not the writer who writes from behind the shields of those who stand ready with drawn swords, not only to protect him, but to make his arguments or invectives a pretext to assail his opponents. Let a hundred or two reformers be excluded from the church, and who will not think with the doctor himself, that his book is unanswerable. The powers that be, in the church, may indeed excommunicate the *men*, but why will they not reflect that *logic* is not a subject of excommunication? Have church rulers, in these modern times, no fear of this ghost? It may, perhaps, in spite of the door-keeper, and the rules, get into the General Conference: it is a subtle spirit, and can penetrate almost any thing but thick skulls. There is a singular fatality about "some" of the "popular topics of doctor Bond's Appeal." After going the rounds among the fathers, and the bishops, and the presiding elders, &c. &c. and receiving their best polish from the pen of the doctor, a travelling preacher dissolves them, almost as by a touch. Let these be the eternal distinctions between old and new side men; while the former exclude members by their *power*, let the latter destroy error by their *logic*. In such a bloodless career of victory, who would not say to the reformers, "on, brethren, on!" And in such a career, who can doubt the final triumph of the latter over the former. Never before this period, has the cause of reform occupied such an elevated position, as it does at present. Almost at the very time when power is demanding sacrifices from among us, and calling us to martyrdom, the eyes of the nation are turned to the merits of our controversy, and our countrymen are brought to see, that we are ready and willing to suffer in liberty's holy cause. I have already told you, my reforming brethren, that in my opinion, opposition to representation would melt away in the General Conference itself, and I feel confirmed in this belief. Were you not slow of heart, twelve months ago, to believe what you now see with your own eyes. A local preacher is the great champion and leader in the cause of non-resistance and passive obedience, and a travelling preacher leads in the cause of representation and church rights. Can you

help smiling, to see our hierarchy led on in opposition to representation by doctor Bond, and Mr. Shinn handling his invincible book like a mere play thing. It is thus my friends that you begin to taste the sweet rewards of perseverance. A few may fall, by the hands of power, but fear not, the cause will be nobly won.

Lingunore, August, 1827.

No. 61.

Mutual Rights, vol. iv. May, 1828, page 310.

N. Snethen's answer to the constructions which are given to certain parts of his essay on church property, in "a Narrative and Defence."

This essay, like all others, offered for publication in the Mutual Rights, was subjected to the judgment of the editorial committee. I only requested that it might be published with my proper name. I see no cause to blush at any of the parts, which have been extracted by the author of the Narrative and Defence. But the meaning which is given to certain passages surprises me exceedingly, as no such meaning had ever entered into my mind. I must have been innocent of any slanderous intentions, for I was ignorant of them. I could not design to write what I did not think of. All the objections, which I supposed could be made to the essay, I was prepared to meet, and to answer.

The great defect in our government, as I conceive, is the want of an independent legislative department. In my conscience, I do believe, that an independent General Conference never can exist under the present organization: my anxiety to make the presiding elders elective was chiefly to promote the independence of the General Conference. An independent legislature seems to me to be out of the question, while a large proportion of the legislative body, are under executive patronage. But I consider the hold, which the exclusive power of making the appointments, gives to the bishop upon the property, as the great instrument, by which the General Conference may be forever controlled. On this subject, Cincinnatus in the Wesleyan Repository wrote with the skill of a master, his leading object was to promote the election of the presiding elders. It seems to me, that the most effectual way, if not the only way to coun-

tervail the influence of property, is to introduce lay delegation into the General Conference; but if I said, or meant to be understood, as though I had said, that the property is vested in the bishops, in *fee*, how could I suppose, that the lay delegates would acquire any title to it. The knowledge of the fact, that the property is deeded to the General Conference, is one of the reasons why I urge so earnestly the principle of representation. If I had written the meaning, the author of the Defence, says I have; he might laugh at, or pity my bad logic; but I should be unworthy of his displeasure. The houses I knew could not be taken from the preachers, because the preachers exclusively compose the General Conference, the lay delegates cannot be taken from the houses, and therefore they might act independently of executive control, or any fear of it. My object in writing the essay on church property, was to promote independent legislation. Cannot this object be perceived by an unprejudiced reader? The contested election of 1824, and the triumph of the opposers of the election of the presiding elders, and also the consequent fears of the minority were matters of notoriety. Censures of the minority, not to say threatenings, were frequent. With these men I had co-operated, and for them I was deeply interested. I therefore anticipated in the essay the treatment they might receive, (I did not say that they would be so treated) as the most likely means, which I could employ to prevent them from being so treated. I had known more than one preacher who had left the connexion, or located in consequence of General Conference disagreements. "Perhaps" they did say of the place where the conference met, (it met most frequently in Baltimore,) O Baltimore, Baltimore! "perhaps" I heard them say so. Whether a certain preacher who advocated the appeal and left the General Conference, when he found himself in the minority did so exclaim, I know not. In my essay I had no reference to him, nor those with whom he acted. The author of the Defence may huff and flounce as much as he pleases, but I can assure the reader, that minority men have not in the general felt unlimited confidence in the forgetfulness of the men in power, whom they have had the misfortune to oppose. I could tell some strange tales about a certain proposition to raise a fund to meet the wants of those travelling preachers who might fall under executive displeasure for advocating certain principles, and also about application to me, after I had located, to write to certain

attowards and trustees in the north, &c. I have had great opportunities to know the minds of travelling preachers, about food and raiment matters. My opposition has never been to men, but to measures, or their consequences. I have seen in the system the germs of high church polity, and I see them developing themselves under every exciting cause.

How could it enter into the mind of any man that I meant to slander a man in 1825, whom I had eulogized in a funeral discourse in 1816. I had nothing more to hope for from his successors in the former period, than in the latter. Party spirit upon the plan of reform which I advocate, can have no place. We have petitioned the General Conference. Let my meaning in an essay on church property respecting Mr. Asbury be made a question; and then could it be logically inferred, that because I wrote good, good, good, in one instance, I meant in the other to write bad of the same man. Had I written an essay to prove that Mr. A. was a bad man, my former eulogy of his character might have well been opposed to it. My conscience bears me witness, I lie not, it never entered into my mind to detract from Mr. Asbury's character at any time. If it had not been almost universally known, that we were always of different church politics, and that I was generally among the more zealous opposers of executive power, in conference and out of it, I should not have been careful to publish my funeral discourse; but even in that, when examined in manuscript by the authorities, some objectionable matter was pointed out, though it was suffered to pass. But if any confidence is to be placed in man, I could not but know that the episcopal power was feared even in the hands of Mr. Asbury, and if my own ears are to be trusted, he was flattered by some of the very men, who feared his power. It was not only indelicate, but rude and insolent in the writer of the article in the Defence, to affect, to falsify the facts on which my theory was predicated in the manner he has. How could he have known all the men, and all the cases which might have fallen under my notice in the course of twenty years of active travels through the United States. As to John Bond, or the stuff he was made of, I knew nothing, he lived after my time; well might my "enemy" declaim about the want of harmony between my judgment and my imagination, if while I supposed that I was theorising upon the subject of flattery, I was giving vent to the ravings of party spirit, and aspersing the character of the dead, either in forgetfulness,

or in violation of all my former testimonies. If the public see cause to judge at all upon my essay, is it unreasonable to ask them to judge upon the merits of the case without the aid of my interpreter. What proof has he given that I meant to describe real cases of tyrannical administration, and of actual instances of persecuting men out of the connexion? Why forsooth, I mentioned a place. Is there not reason to suspect, that this writer has become so familiar with church butcheries, and so habited to the language of reproach, as to conceive that power can only act palpably. The power however, of good bishops, may make itself to be feared without the aid of a mitre, or a helmet. In my youthful days all who feared power were not gudgeons, they did not always stand still and wait to be knocked on the head. They could take a hint before it was quite so broad as to kick them out of doors. Mr. Asbury and those who succeeded to the power vested in the episcopacy, surrounded, and continue to surround themselves with confidants. They see more men, and many things through other men's eyes; more than one preacher within my knowing has labored under a suspicion that some body stood between them and their bishop, and that their appointments were not always the dictation of a bishop's judgment alone. It is not an easy matter for all the preachers in an annual conference to keep in equal favor with all the bishops and all the presiding elders. When men are fully aware of the favors they may derive from official friendships, they are not apt to be unmindful of the dangers to be apprehended from official enmities.

Almost the only objection to my essay, which I had heard of, was to the case of Mr. Wesley and his preacher, this was one of the lies I was told, Mr. Hitt said I had knowingly written. Mr. Alexander Yearly, I was also told, asked in the Baltimore quarterly meeting conference, whether there was any authority given for the story, and on being answered in the negative, concluded that it was a vile slander. But in all this, it may be presumed that he did not suspect he might possibly be speaking evil of a minister, if not slandering one. I related the case, as nearly as my memory would serve me, from an English preacher of unquestioned veracity, who had known Mr. Wesley personally, and was disposed to vindicate him in this matter. I am sure I had no intention of slandering Mr. Wesley, as I considered the right of property and the power all on his side. When I

said that the General Conference supposes that the bishops can do no wrong. My words are, the discipline in giving unlimited power to the bishops, supposes, &c. I did suppose that all Methodist preachers, and Methodists at least, would have understood me to mean in stationing the preachers. It does not often happen, I believe, that men in any community, attempt to deny in the presence of their fellow citizens, the existence of the laws contained in their common statute books, as the writer must suppose I had done. The stationing power of the bishops is unlimited, and it is not long since a book was written in part to prove, that it is right that it should be so. Does the general discipline presume that the bishops can do wrong in stationing the preachers? Does it presume that there can be a transgression of a law, when none exists? What law does a bishop transgress when he takes a preacher from a house? Is it not the very condition of admission into the travelling connexion that the preacher is to do that part of the work which his appointers judge proper. But why did I mention or allude to this? Only to shew its tendency to make the General Conference dependent upon the bishops, in whom the stationing power is vested. Now who can help but see that it is not necessary for a preacher to be taken from a house, in order to make him feel his dependence, but merely to know, that it may be done, either at the will of the bishop, or through the influence of a presiding elder. I could write a little volume of the fears and jealousies of travelling preachers, even in the patriarchate of Mr. Asbury. And in regard to the present incumbents, the author of the Defence might have put himself in mind, not only of the adage, "Rome was not built in a day," but that it was not destroyed in a day.

My good friends in the Baltimore annual conference with a few exceptions, have quieted my fears for themselves and their families. They are no longer minority men. How it may be with them hereafter, if they may even want bread and medicine, I know not. As the old foundations are all broken up, I can form no conjecture how parties will divide in the next General Conference. Rumor says that there is an anxious, if not a fearful looking for, of the elections to come. I did once rejoice much at the success of any of my quondam friends, and why may I not still do so? I have not deserted them or the common cause. They may now see how I have put myself in jeopardy, for their sakes, and

that I am no traitor. How can they now believe me to be the wretch, I am represented to be, by the author of detraction, instead of Defence. Let it not be said, that all the good friends of reform in 1824, in the itinerancy, could suffer my aspersions of the character of the dead to sleep in silence until 1828, and then join in the common reproach, just gotten up by one man. Such a statement must involve their heads or their hearts in some blame. The root of all our evils is in the dependence of the General Conference. Nay but its members can do wonders, they can impeach and expel bishops, that is they can change masters. The servile fears which the absolute stationing power is calculated to produce among itinerants, is enough to corrupt any body of men in any office, whether in church or state. My reproacher is a pernicious flatterer, he flatters the living through the dead. Whoever will be at the pains to look over Lavoisne's map of the papal succession, will find that the dead popes are all saints. Can the living popes have a surer pledge that they too will die saints? When John, and Thomas, and Francis, and Richard, are all canenized, and any one or more of the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church can find means to excommunicate any of their brethren, whom they may take it into their heads to prosecute for speaking evil of ministers, we too may write upon the bells of all the horses, "holiness to the bishops." The quotation in the defence about the manner of bringing bishops to trial might have been spared, it was not denied, it was not perverted, I had tried my strength at this bow of Ulysses. Mr. O'Kelly had blown upon it, and I found it most "expedient" to pass it in silence. The first named members of the committee must be presiding elders of the bishop's own choosing, the very men of his confidence, the remainder are to be elders and deacons of their choosing; and if they acquit, there the matter ends; but if they impeach, the General Conference may judge otherwise and acquit, where then will be the fears of the impeaching committee? How many of the General Conference may be presiding elders?

My opinion is, that a lay delegation which shall not lead to an independent legislation, will be of little account; but that without lay delegation, an independent legislation will be impossible. On the comparative character of a monarchy and an aristocracy, I have long since given my views. In my judgment the former is most apt to be the popular

favorite. The travelling preacher, who has been left without the means of subsistence for one year, and the expelled local preachers and lay members will perhaps have an opinion of their own, about the tender mercies of aristocratical imitations, and combinations.

In regard to Mr. Asbury's election by the American preachers, I had never heard but one opinion, and that was that the measure was neither ordered nor approved by Mr. Wesley. No circumstance is more distinctly in my recollection than that, Mr. Asbury conceived that the English preachers were of the opinion, that Mr. Wesley might recall him, and that some of them were disposed to use their influence to effect his recall. The documents, I thought best, in my answer to O'Kelly to suppress, and Mr. Asbury acquiesced. Well what is my inference? Is it that Mr. Asbury was a bad man? Nothing like it; I never thought of such a thing until I saw it in the Narrative. I inferred that the election of Mr. Asbury for life, ought not to be binding on the General Conference, as a precedent, to elect the bishops for life. If there were in England a factious influence operating to effect Mr. Asbury's recall from America, and he could countervail it by the election of the preachers, who met in Baltimore, I see no sin in it. If the author will prove, that it was Mr. Wesley's wish and orders, that Mr. Asbury should be elected by the American preachers, a bishop over them for life; then he will prove that I was mistaken, and that I am so still; until this defence appeared, I never heard it intimated that Mr. Wesley was the proposer of Mr. Asbury's election. All the circumstantial evidence convinces me that he was not; but that he was actually displeased with the measure. I will here relate what was my impression of Mr. Asbury's movements, at several of the General Conferences. It seemed to me that he laid his plans so as to call forth some expression from the General Conference, which might seem to be tantamount to a re-election. In the last General Conference he ever attended, he talked of withdrawing from the scene of his American labors, and the General Conference voted their request, that he should not leave them. I joined not in the vote, but if the discipline had made the bishops re-elective, no man could have been more prompt to re-elect Mr. Asbury than myself.

I do contend that the editorial committee, the Union Society, and every reader of the Mutual Rights, had an inde-

feasible right to judge of the matter of my essays, and my intentions in writing them, and if they judged that I neither slandered the dead nor the living, and did not mean to do it, no man, not immediately and personally concerned, had any right to make an opposite judgment a ground of a prosecution, much less of expulsion from the church; and that every line in the Narrative and Defence, of such a prosecution and expulsion, ought to shock the feelings of every American citizen. What would be thought of a set of men who should appear in the character of prosecutors, to procure the banishment or the capital punishment of certain editors and patrons of a book, because that in their judgment, it slandered certain men, now or formerly in office? And what would be thought of the freedom of the press, and of the rights and liberties of American citizens, if their banishment should be thus procured?

Mr. Hanson seemed to have thought that he paid a light compliment to Dr. Jennings, when he refused time to correspond with the authors of the essays. I think his reason, as reported by the Doctor, would have induced any set of men, save Methodist reformers, to have put an end to the process at once. Why, in the name of all that is just and reasonable, could not Mr. Hanson have conferred with Dr. Jennings, or with the committee, so soon as he was made acquainted with those parts of the Mutual Rights which were deemed offensive? Was it incompatible with his office, to act the part of an umpire, or a peace maker. The method the gentleman has pursued has eventuated in the expulsion of all the prosecuted men; could any other method have ended more fatally? Is it probable that the public esteem for a physician, will be increased by his producing the death of all his patients, as proof that he took the best possible means to save them all? Did Mr. Hanson believe in his heart that the result would be as it has proved to be? Or did he believe, or hope, that it would have been otherwise? If the latter, then he was mistaken; if the former, let the matter remain between God and his conscience. It would have afforded great satisfaction, to have found in his Narrative, a single proof from his own pen, that he used any means to give the accused fair play. But according to his own shewing, he did nothing in compliance with the request of the accused. And he sets up an hypothetical defence for himself why he did not. He had no power it seems, to compel the attendance of committee men, &c.

&c. Would it not have been better if he could have said, that, finding the men he had selected were objected to, he tried to get others, but they would not serve? Had he done so, his defence would not have been suppositious. Impartial readers of the Narrative can have but one opinion, and that is, that Mr. Hanson presided over an *exparte* prosecution, that in Baltimore there were no middle men, or that, he would have none of them on these trials: in either case the trials ought not to have been.

If at any time before these trials, notice had been given to me either verbally, or by letter, or in the Mutual Rights, by any or all of the prosecutors in substance, the same as now appears in the Narrative, no man need have been prosecuted or expelled on my account. I would have taken all my burden on my own shoulders. As the case now stands, I am not convinced that I have misstated any fact beyond the means of a fair and liberal explanation, or that I have drawn false inferences from any premises.

Of the merits of my essay on church property, it does not become me to speak, as writers are seldom competent to judge of their own productions, but I cannot conceal the complacency I feel in consideration of the lengths of the extracts, which the narrator has given. It is probable, that scarcely five hundred persons had ever read my essay on church property, and it was in the power of this searcher of my heart, and of my words, to have taken only the parts which he has falsely construed, and given a meaning to, of which I had never thought, and which I should have never known, without the aid of his pen. May I not now fairly presume, that his addition of extracts has given a circulation to my thoughts, which they would not otherwise ever have obtained, and that if they possess any measure of the value I have persuaded myself to believe they do, their effect cannot be wholly lost on the public mind. That my arguments have not been refuted, or even attempted to be refuted, I feel morally certain. The object of this extractor was evidently not to reason with me, but to abuse me. He has held me up to public view, not only as an object of odium, but of public execration. Still, however, I feel confident that the extracts he has given of my essay, will greatly promote the cause of reform. I even anticipate that these extracts alone, will revolutionize property matters in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and thus lead to the downfall of the Colossus of itinerant power, which is based upon it.

Hundreds, yea thousands, have already read my thoughts, to whom they were as new as if they had just fell down from the skies. And many of these, when they wake in the morning, or at some hour of the night, will hear these thoughts speak within them, and feel conviction of their truth—Yes! O yes!! will many a travelling preacher say, it is so, I see it now. Snethen is right. Our boasted title to church property, only ministers to the powers of the bishops, and serves to destroy the independence of the General Conference itself. It is plain, it is evident to demonstration, that we must call in the lay delegates to our aid, or that the power of which we have been so tenacious, will forever react to our own hurt; we ourselves by it must become the most dependant. The people are our truest friends, and to them we must show ourselves friendly. It is amusing to hear Mr. Hanson predicting the rise and success of another row of reformers. There was a time when the enemies of Columbus might have made similar predictions in reference to the discoverer of America; might well have foretold, while he was in a dungeon and in chains, that other voyagers must complete the work he had begun. I cannot but smile at the fond anticipations of this reformer: when the church shall call for reformation, he will still be willing. Has the church any will out of the General Conference, has the church any other tongue or voice? Those who come after me will know who advanced the principles of reform, and who were true to them.

Volume iv. of the Mutual Rights for 1827-'28, is most interesting, as finishing the account of the catastrophe of the Baltimore expulsions.

The Mutual Rights was transferred by the Union Society to the Rev. Dennis B. Dorsey, to be published once in two weeks, in a newspaper form, with the addition to its title of Christian Intelligencer. The 1st No. appeared September 5, 1828.

No. 63.

Christian Intelligencer, vol. 1. September 20, 1828, page 6.

Thoughts on Representation. Dedicated to Young Travelling Preachers.

No. I.

The human mind is not only destitute of the principle of intuition, but it is often incapable of receiving impressions from the plainest and most distinct communications of the senses. Previous conceptions and existing desires or aversions, may not only suspend the operations of our understandings, in regard to what may be passing in our senses, but entirely change the facts presented by the senses to them. At the time of the memorable stir which grew out of the decision of the General Conference of 1792, I was a young man and a young preacher; remote from the scene, and a stranger to the parties concerned. All my information was, of course, derived from the travelling preachers, of whose intelligence and impartiality I had no more doubt, than of their veracity. Concerning things that they had seen and heard, I took it for granted they could not be mistaken; entirely overlooking the fact that much of what they did relate, they could neither see nor hear. For they not only told me what such and such men did and said, but why and wherefore they did and said thus and so. Motives and intentions, thoughts and designs, that were known only to God, were thus transmitted to me, by my seniors and superiors, as facts, and as such I received them, without reflection or examination. It is evident, therefore, that my mind was prejudiced against men I had never seen, not merely because they had done a peculiar act, or held a certain opinion; but I was led to infer from my information that they were bad men, and whatever they might say or do in their vindication, must go for nothing so long as this prejudice against their moral characters existed in my mind. All that those men could have said of the nature and tendency of the existing powers, though its truth might have been as evident as the sun at noon day, would not have convinced me but that they were bad men. And while this prejudice remained, I must needs have thought I did God service, in opposing them. Now it is possible, that the characters of the men might have been as bad as I had prejudged them to be, but if it could have been proved that

they were so, it would not have justified my prejudice, nor corrected the fallacy of the medium through which it was derived. In this manner, nine out of ten of the young travelling preachers, have derived, or will have derived, their information, respecting reform and reformers. And how can a young preacher doubt what a bishop or presiding elder shall tell him of a reformer. Will it be likely to occur to the youth, that the venerable and holy father is passing off his own conjectures and opinions as facts; or that age and piety give no insight into the motives and intentions of the hearts of those who differ in opinion from them. It seems that there is hardly a besetment of our frail nature, that we are so seldom successful in guarding against, as evil surmisings. To question a man's motives, is, indeed, infinitely easier than to answer his arguments. The toil-worn veterans of itinerancy, are not unfrequently heard conversing in the presence of their juniors, upon the motives of reformers, with as much familiarity as though they could see through their breast bones. But they neither suspect themselves, nor are they suspected by their youthful auditors of uttering merely their own suspicions, instead of facts. As soon as I had ascertained that the bishops had taken a stand against church representation, I not only anticipated what has come to pass, but also, how it would come to pass. The question itself, though of all others the most simple and identical, and the most easy of comprehension by American people, would become involved with the motives and characters of men, and with strange and foreign associations and consequences. A writes in favor of reform. He is a man of speculation, a mere theorist. B, also writes in favor of reform. He is a visionary, a mere creature of whim and caprice. C, is indeed a sensible writer, but he is irritable and passionate. As for D, though a well meaning man, he is weak headed. Now all this may be true, and yet have no earthly connection with the principle of representation. But these men are actuated, with selfish and ambitious motives. How has this come to be known, have they whispered their motive in confidence, to some treacherous friend who has betrayed the secret? But motives have no connexion with the question of right. Let the case be fairly stated. A, B, and C, have elected delegates to the General Conference, and they have been elected while they were travelling preachers, and they are now located. Were their motives then suspected?

Or is it suspected that they have changed their motives, in consequence of location? We will give all the weight to this last suspicion, which can possibly be claimed for it. Give representation to local preachers, and the members, and what possible security can A, B, or C, have, that they shall be elected? However, suppose them to be elected, and to take their seats in General Conference. The time will then have come for them to act out the hypocritical motives and purposes, so often, and so loudly charged upon them. Will A move, and B second the motion, that local preachers may have the right to occupy, exclusively, any pulpit they may choose, and for such a length of time as may suit their interest, or inclination. The President shall then call for the question—"shall this motion be sustained," and call for the ayes and noes. How would the conference divide? Suppose all the local preachers to vote for it, an event by the way not at all likely, would they make a majority of all the delegates present? If not, then all those dreaded motives of the advocates of representation, would vanish into empty air. What a ninny must he be, who shall go into a legislative assembly, composed of representatives of the people, in hopes of gaining exclusive privileges. I do not believe, that there is a local preacher in the world, so fool-hardy as to attempt any such thing, and thus expose himself to be laughed to scorn. A General Conference, composed of the representative, travelling and local preachers and laity, will be no place in which to seek monopolies; independence and freedom of speech are formidable adversaries to the seekers of glory and interest.

I have no wish to prejudice young men against their venerated leaders; but to remove the prejudice which they have imbibed against the friends of representation. Unless this prejudice can be removed, all argument must be lost upon them. The old preachers, I am persuaded, have not attended to the nature and tendency of impeaching motives, or they would themselves have been shocked at it. They have, on the contrary, as I have said in a former case, overlooked the distinction between motives and facts.

No. II.

When any considerable number of our citizens meet on any political occasion, the public prints announce it in capitals—"A meeting of the People." Why are these capitals employed? They are expressive of sovereignty, the

sovereignty of the people, they are in the place of H. H. or His Majesty. The question at issue between the reformers, and the travelling preachers, is a question of sovereignty. The meeting of the Maryland Convention of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was preparatory to a general convention, to petition the General Conference to renounce the sovereignty which it exercises over the church, in making laws for it without its representatives; not to transfer that sovereignty to the travelling preachers, or to divide it with them.

The meeting of this convention, is one of the most important and interesting events in the history of Methodism. I have shared in the sovereignty of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and have been a member of the General Conference as often as I wished to be. But though I took part in favor of the interests of the church, and the travelling preachers, I retired from the exercise of this imperious power, with painful feelings. I have been making laws for others (I would say to myself) without their consent, and if they refuse to submit to them, they may be excluded from the ministry, or the church. Who gave me this power? And how can I vindicate myself from the exercise of it, before my final judge? But humbled, repentant, and resolved never again to partake in this operation, I have, however, submitted to it as a preacher for many years, preferring rather to *suffer* wrong, than to *do* wrong. At length a happy day has arrived. I have met and acted with men who assert their freedom and sovereignty,—not as their leader,—but as their equal; and thus tasted the purest of all social pleasures. It is this feeling, when contrasted with those feelings which are often excited by the presence of men who unite in the offices of law-giver, ruler and judge! For associating and co-operating with those who assert their independence of all human sovereignty, religious, as well as civil, my motives are impeached, my name is consigned over to the young preachers, as an object of prejudice, that my example may be prevented from producing imitations when I am dead. The minds of young preachers are inspired with prejudice against those, who take preparatory measures to send a petition to General Conference. Young men, pause, I beseech you, and reflect on this! Our object is to prepare a petition to deprive you of the succession to legislative sovereignty over us. Do not suffer your minds to be diverted from this position, this state of the fact. If

our petition is granted, you will have to meet the church and the local ministry, by their representatives in the General Conference, as your equals, and they to meet you as their equals. The sovereign legislative power will be in the whole body, for the benefit of the whole. Your own ambition is concerned in this matter—deeply concerned. Beware, I beseech you, of every artifice, by which your minds may lead you to impute to others, the subtle passions, which the power in prospect before you, is calculated to kindle in your own breasts. A hundred, a thousand times, you have been taught to say, that our motives are bad, that our plan will destroy the work of God ; but before you suffer yourselves to repeat the sentiments, consider the consequence which must follow, if they be true. It will follow that legislative sovereignty in the ministry, cannot be opposed without bad motives, that the work of God cannot be carried on without the sovereignty. If we should gain all we ask for, we shall gain nothing in comparison of what you must lose ; for we gain nothing but self-government ; but you lose absolute sovereignty. In our *manner* of self-government, you must also be equal partakers.

The privilege of petitioning is not denied to the most abject vassals, by their most absolute rulers. Why, then, should prejudice be excited on this account, either against motives, or measures ? Does this anxiety to prevent a petition, proceed from a fixed determination not to grant it ? Then let it be confined to the aged preachers, let them bear the responsibility. The time may not be distant, when the young men will not be *able* to bear it. Their minds ought to be left to act without prejudice, as necessity may require.

Suppose that some one of the few remaining sages, who co-operated in the achievement of our independence, should say to one of our popular young preachers, "Young man, I am told that thou art opposed to the principle of church representation ?" Would he have the courage to look him in the face and say, "I am ?" Suppose the sage were to proceed,—and if thy heart be thus early inspired with ambition, to act the part of a sovereign legislator, over the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood, what bounds will be set to thy ambition, when thou art three score ? Our young preachers are, indeed, heirs to a lordly inheritance. And from this fact, the public mind will not be suffered hereafter to be diverted. Far be it from us to create a public prejudice against these blooming

itinerants. No! we warn them of the danger of creating this prejudice against themselves. Their feelings may not perhaps be quite so pleasant as they may wish, should they find themselves pointed at throughout this great republic, as the aspirants to church sovereignty. The old men may bear this. Past services may carry them onward to the end of their career. Not so with the youth. Their reliance must be upon the excitement of ambition, radiating in the heart the love of power. O! that these dear young men could, by a friendly warning, be diverted from the dominion which dazzles their imagination to the gulph beneath them! Ah! friends, how delusive are your dreams of treading in the footsteps of the Wesleys and the Asburys. After many years of labor and care, they just touched the summit of the mount, and died. But you are to set out in your course from the point where theirs was concluded. You are in the beginning to drink a full draught from the cup, at which they slaked their thirst, when they were too old to be intoxicated with its contents. What to them was as a gentle stimulant, on your youthful blood and spirits will produce wild delirium. The wise and good will pronounce you drunk with power, while you, and your misguided flatterers, will fondly conceive that you are the very imps of the fathers and founders of Methodism. Why, O why is it, that you cannot be made to perceive how circumstances alter men, as well as cases? I am not anxious to prove, my dear young friends, that you are more ambitious than Wesley or Asbury, any more than I should be, that the young heir, who revels and wantons in the possession of the hard earned treasures, bequeathed to him at his father's death, has a more innate love of pleasure, than his father had before him. The means, and exertions necessary to the father, in his poverty, might have corrected this propensity; but the son has no such countervailing excitement. Wesley and Asbury began without power. You are to begin with it. They began without property. You are to begin *with hundreds of thousands*. They had to gain a name. You to *inherit* it. All the exciting causes of ambition, are to operate upon your excitability, from the very outset. Already the prospect of power has rendered you deaf to the call of glory, and stifled the incipient workings of a generous fellow feeling for those who are struggling for mutual rights.

AN OLD MAN ON THE NEW SIDE.

Methodist Philosophy.

There is very little philosophy among the common people, in any age or country. And as the great body of the members of our church are of that class of society, called the common people, not in derision, or in the same sense as plebeians, or peasants, we do not intend to disparage them, or the church, if we should say, that there is not much philosophy among them. But the fact is notorious, that the great body of our preachers, are not only taken from among the common people, but that no artificial means are employed to elevate their minds to a higher grade. Philosophy as a science can hardly be said to exist in the ministry or the church. If the reputed author, and leader of the old side party, be a philosopher in other respects, we are not yet convinced that he is a political one. As it regards deep insight into human nature, and the structure of human society, we doubt if he be entitled to rank much above the rest of us. But if the claim should be set up for him, as a cunning politician, let it not be inferred, that we mean to contest it, or that we would deny that his ambition is quite equal to the high distinction he has obtained. Much as he was admired as an author, we thought that we could clearly foresee, that he would not be satisfied with this distinction, that the admiration of his talents as a writer, would not be palpable enough, and that the sword was more congenial to his feelings, than the pen. He could not but know, that no one could measure swords with him; that as the adviser and contriver of a system of expulsion, he was in no danger of having the same measure meted back to him again. The impotence of the rival party was very evident, and it was equally so, that they could not by any adventitious aid gain the expelling power.

The temptation to proceed to expulsion was too strong to be resisted, save by a sound philosophy, or insight into the laws of cause and effect, which bear upon the subject. The thing took on all sides; the plan was just level with the feelings of the common people. No reason was required to recommend it. It seemed plain at the first view, that the shortest way to get rid of a rival is to kill him at once. All the five bishops it seems swallowed the bait. Neither of

them was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. From the least unto the greatest, all took counsel of their feelings. Thus the old adage "one fool makes many." He who first suggested the thought, which the common feelings inspire, has the honor of being the leader.

We have often seen fire burn most actively against the wind. The reason is, the current of air furnishes the greatest quantity of oxygen to the flame. Our Solomons have done their most at the beginning. They must now kill reform, or it will kill them sure enough. They have put reformers upon the necessity of seeking the confidence of the public, personally, as well as casually. The public, already predisposed to favor their principles, need only to be assured, that reformers are honest men, and they will regard the great guns of the old side, only, as they would squibs. It is our deliberate opinion that in the whole connection, a more unfit counsellor could not have been found, than the one whose counsels are ostensibly followed. He is the "prophet of mischief." Independence, when such an adviser was listened to, took its flight from the annual conference, philosophy was confounded, and measures were carried as by acclamation.

The work is now done, the measure of folly is now filled up. Necessity will become the mother of instruction to itinerant preachers. Painful experience will teach them, that they are not the men, and that wisdom will not die with them. But wherever Methodism is preached in the whole world, will this deed of folly be told to their shame. Posterity will wonder and stand astonished, that a wise man among a thousand could not have been found, to stand forth, to stop his brethren in this blind career of power. We long ago foresaw and foretold, that in our body, power would become beyond all proportion, greater than wisdom. The prerogatives are ever present, ever felt, but the wisdom that is profitable to direct, must be dug for, as for hidden treasure, it comes not unasked, unsought for, in the time it is most needed. It must be collected and held in reserve, against the time to come.

OPINER.

This number contains an account of the Convention, and Articles of Association.

Critique on the word Despot.

The General Conference take exception to the friends of representation, for calling itinerant preachers *despots*. The word is derived from the Greek. The owner of the ass, in *Æsop*, is called a despot. And in the New Testament the masters of servants are called despots. Servants be obedient unto your own masters, (despots.) The owner of the house, goods, &c. is a despot. An absolute ruler in a state is also a despot. It is in this sense, itinerant preachers have been called despots. They have the power to rule as they please. Laws are not put into their hands to execute, according to laws made to limit their power, and for the abuse of which, the people may make them responsible. The President of the United States is not a despot. The governors of the several states are not despots. They neither own the people nor the property. They do not govern absolutely,—do not make the laws they execute, without being accountable to the people. The power of itinerant preachers, is beyond all dispute, despotic. Can they hold and exercise that power, without being despots? When they make laws for us, they do not consult us. When they make laws for themselves, they do not consult us. But we ought not to be tenacious for a word, any more, than we ought to be made *offenders* for a word. If it gives offence, let us give it up. There are words enough in the English language to express our meaning, without going to the Greek for one. Let the Greeks then keep their theme *Despozoo*, (I rule,) to themselves, we neither want it nor its derivations. But whether we use it, or not, the itinerant preachers will rule over us, without suffering us to set any bounds to their power. If we do not forever hereafter hold our peace, it seems we must call them 'benefactors.' These rude "would be Methodist reformers" must take lessons, and learn how to speak of majesty. They must give flattering titles to men, and say one thing and mean another. How fine words, like fine clothes, disguise the conditions of men! A body of men who with their wives and children are dependent on the will of another, for a plan of existence, are indignant when they hear the power they exercise over those below them, called by its right name. "We can no longer with Johnson, ridicule the maxim, "He

that ruleth over free men, must be free." We begin now, very seriously to doubt, whether men, who are not tenacious of their own liberty, can feel much regard for the liberties of others. It requires some reflection, to discover the slavery of the king's attendants through their soft raiment.

No. 65.

Christian Intelligencer, vol. 1. December 20, 1828, p. 80.

A short Sermon.

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Gal. v. 1.

If it should be made a question, how much liberty may a christian enjoy? It may be safely answered, just so much as Christ has given him. Christ can give his disciples no liberty to neglect, or transgress his own laws. Now the Apostle says expressly, that we are *under law to Christ*. It is indeed, acknowledged on all sides, that he is a king; as such, he must be supposed to have his laws. But a king in effect, is dethroned, when he ceases to enforce obedience to his laws. We may not then, for one moment indulge the thought, that Christ makes us free from his own laws. He is our king, our law-maker, and our judge. This being granted, it will still remain a question; what are the laws of Christ? We say that the moral laws of Moses, and the moral laws of Christ are identical. Moses taught his disciples to love the Lord their God with all their hearts, and souls, and minds, and strength; and their neighbors as themselves. Did the Lord Jesus Christ teach his disciples otherwise? Surely, no one, in so many words, will say so. But in every case, in which the moral precepts in the Old and New Testament are found to be identical, Christ hath not made us free from them. We may not suppose, that he repealed any law, or command, in order to re-enact it: Jesus Christ does not make us free from himself. Our religious dependance is all transferred to himself. When we receive him as our Saviour, he frees us from all other saviours. No one save the Messiah, could make the Jews free from the burdensome ritual of the law of ceremonies. He alone could make the bloody sacrifices to cease, by the sacrifice of himself. We are now at liberty to enter into the holiest, by a new and living way, which Christ hath consecrated by

his own blood. Through Christ as our great high priest, we may "come boldly to the throne of grace." In the worship of the Gentiles, there were images, and altars, and sacrifices; and priests and utensils; and the forms and the ceremonies were not wanting. In the Jewish worship there were no images, but no want of priests and altars, and sacrifices. We might say in some sense that Moses made the Jews free from image worship, or idolatry;—not from the sacrificing of animals. But Christ hath made us free from both. Christian worship, where it was first introduced, must have been a strange sight. Nothing like it was to be seen among Jews or Gentiles. No images, no altars, no priests, no victims, no sacrifices, no dresses, and no ceremonies. Men and women prophesying and praying together, without any authority or formal consecration from the sacred colleges, and no burning fat, or smoking incense to accompany their devotion. What reason could these people give for these strange innovations? this neglect of so many ancient usages? They had one reason: Christ had made them free. He had brought them into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and they were free indeed. Christ unbound them, he took the yoke of bondage off their necks. The same striking contrast was evident in the preaching, or teaching, among their several worshippers. In the christian assembly only, was the name of Jesus heard. In the old poets and orators, and in the writings of the ancient Jewish rabbies, which have come down to our times, we do not find any thing like the specimens of teaching which are in the New Testament. The christian's motto is Christ and liberty. But great and glorious as is this external liberty, the liberty wherewith Christ makes the heart free, is still more glorious. He sets the soul at liberty, by his victorious love, from the yoke and bondage of sin, and guilt, and fear. The pardon of sin, justification by faith, the spirit of adoption, bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, are parts of christian liberty. Christ makes us free to love, free to rejoice, free to believe, and free to hope. He sets our feet in a large place, to run in the way of his commandments. Where Christ is, there is the spirit of God, and where the spirit of God is, there is liberty. "He breaks the power of cancell'd sin, he sets the pris'ner free."

Stand fast in this liberty; do not relapse into Judaism, nor idolatry; do not relapse into sin; do not cast away your confidence in the Messiah, which hath great recompense of

reward; hold fast the beginning of it steadfast unto the end. If we live not up to our privileges as believers, we shall become entangled in the yoke of bondage. We cannot remain free, if we stand not fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us so.

"Stand then in his great might,
With all his strength endu'd."

"When brought into bondage again, what hope of a second release?" Christ hath somewhat against all who fall from their first love. Backsliders suffer a fearful loss of liberty. Their confidence in God is shaken, and they suspect every body of a want of confidence in them. Hypocrisy, or presumption, follows quickly upon the heels of sins against Christ. The liberty into which Christ calls us, is not to be "used as an occasion to the flesh." The grace of God, is not to be turned into wantonness. It is to be lamented, that some, otherwise good teachers, prove themselves to be little mindful of consequences, in teaching christian liberty. In striving to exalt the gospel, they speak as though they thought they never could say enough against the law. But we say that Christ makes us free to obey his laws, by making us free from the *ceremonial* law. The time, the labor, the expense of these burdensome sacrifices and rites, St. Peter complains of, as a "yoke which neither their fathers nor they were able to bear." We cannot do two things at a time. All this time, therefore, all this labor and expense, Christ enables us to devote to moral purposes, by freeing us from the obligations of the legal sacrifices and rites, and making our devotions wholly spiritual. Prayer under the law, was expensive, or rather, the accompanying incense was so. All the legal services required money and price, without them, neither wine nor milk could be bought. Under the gospel, pardon and salvation are free. This is the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. Gospel faith, and not legal works, brings the blessing. The gospel does every thing for us, but make us free from Christ. This it could not do, without making us independent beings. It makes us as free as dependant creatures can be. Without Christ, we can do nothing; but we can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth us. The wavering faith in Christ, which is daily manifest among professors of religion, is greatly to be deplored. Unstable as water, they cannot excel. Like waves of the sea, driven with the wind and

tossed, they look in vain for blessings from the gospel. Their souls remain not long enough in one condition, to prove the benefits of religion. To the inconstant, fickle tribe of converts, now become so numerous, do we not well to cry out, stand fast, be not again entangled. But to those who are entangled with the grievous yoke of bondage, the guilty and tormenting fear of the wrath to come, who grieve and mourn over the plague of their own hearts, who labor and are heavy laden with sin, we cry, "behold the Lamb!"—"Come to the living waters, come." Take the yoke of Christ upon you, and learn of him. Is it for liberty you pant?—Christ will open the prison doors, and set at liberty those who are bound. He will preach unto you the acceptable year of the Lord, the year of jubilee of our God.

PHILO PISTICUS.

No. 66.

Christian Intelligencer, vol. 1. January, 1829, page 33.

Methodist Episcopal Church.

A Methodist Episcopal Church may mean a Methodist *Bishops'* Church. And in opposition to this, there may be Methodist *people's* churches. The travelling preachers never ask any power of the people. When they give any power to the people, they give them no title to it. It is only a gift at the pleasure of the giver. All the power of the travelling preachers is assumed, or taken by themselves. It certainly was not at first claimed by succession, or in the usual sense of the term, by *divine right*. The weight which now is said to rest upon the General Conference "with the force of a moral obligation," seems to be but a late discovery. We cannot think that it was felt exactly so, in 1784-'5: for, if we understand terms, more was then said about obligations to Mr. Wesley, than of *moral* obligation.

The power of the travelling preachers, might, we have no doubt, if like dutiful children, they had waited for it, have been derived from the last will and testament of Mr. Wesley: but they did not see cause to serve him like sons in the gospel, until he was gathered to his fathers. Power they took, and power they keep; their right to take, or to keep, it might have been easily foreseen, would at no distant day be made a question. In a crisis, even an Indian title to land is thought to be desirable. Is not a title to power also de-

sirable? What right can we have to power, without a title? In those governments, the origin of which is lost in tradition, it is usual to presume that the title did exist; but we know that it never did exist in the case of travelling preachers. The continuance of the power proves nothing, unless it proves that it was assumed: the right, it certainly cannot prove. There is a common sense among mankind upon these matters. Where power is not made to descend by heirship, or succession, it has almost uniformly been referred to the people; and their right to originate it for their common benefit, has been avowed. This is the origin of all republicanism, in church and state. The people are the source and centre of power, and all grants and titles run in the name of the people. The travelling preachers were not the heirs, nor the successors of any ministerial body of men. By taking no title from the people, they could obtain none; for nobody else would give it. Even now, if the Methodist people were to meet by their representatives, and confirm and ratify to them, all their present power, such an act could have no retrospective view. The powers heretofore exercised, would remain as assumed powers; that is, without title or right. For the distinction here between right and title, cannot obtain. The latter cannot be obtained as an act of equity. It has not been lost, or forcibly, or fraudulently taken away: it never existed.

The General Conference have set the will of the people at defiance; they will not acknowledge that they have any rights, and, of course, that they have any to grant to travelling preachers. But the Methodist people have protested against their right to assume certain powers. And in this they will be borne out by the great body of their countrymen, who do not believe in itinerant infallibility. And we feel confident, that those who investigate the case, will be of the opinion, that we have not erred in regard to time,—that we have not been too hasty. The power exercised by the travelling preachers, they must see, is unlimited in its nature, and can receive no check, but from without. While there were men remaining, able and willing to bear their testimony, the crisis ought to have been improved. The act is done; it is done in self-defence. The General Conference made it necessary, as an act of self-preservation to the lovers of religious liberty, and the lovers of Methodist doctrine. We, the members of the church, have spoken. It is the first time such a voice has been heard from

its members; it is not the voice of anger, nor of retaliation. It is a calm, dispassionate voice, which, although travelling preachers never expected to hear, they may greatly profit by. Our advice we know has been long lost upon them. But we ask the public to give us credit when we say, that we have been actuated according to the maxim, "Aristotle loves Plato; but he loves truth better than Plato." O.

No. 67.

Christian Intelligencer, vol. 1. January 5, 1829, page 34.

An Address to the Friends of the Principles of Representation in Church Government.

Respected fellow-laborers, and well-wishers to the cause of representation,—You will doubtless hear of my having accepted of the ministerial charge of the Associated church in Baltimore, until the meeting of our contemplated conference. It is known to those best acquainted with me, that I have been swift to write, and slow to act in behalf of the cause of representation. To write I have never needed a prompter; to act, I have required almost imperious circumstances to urge me on. As a leading writer, in the order of time, could I have also gone before in action, without waking up suspicion that I was "*taking too much upon me?*" As a writer, I could address myself to the understandings of my readers, and to posterity. For seven years I have employed my pen upon this great and interesting subject, as a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Twice, in that space of time, have the General Conference met; twice have I been its humble petitioner, asking, as an elder in the church, some part, by my representative, of the authoritative control of the General Conference, and twice has my right to the thing asked for, been in effect denied and rejected. But, in the last instance, the General Conference have spoken a language I never remember to have heard from that body before. "Divinely instituted ministry—divinely authorised expounders—does rest upon us with the force of a moral obligation—not to permit our ministration—to be authoritatively controlled by *others*;" and, of course, by me, as I am one of the others, in the address of the General Conference of 1828. This was new to me, as the official language of the exclusive body of

men who have "full powers to make rules and regulations for our church." "Others, that is the local preachers and the laity, can have no authority to control the "ministrations" of travelling preachers in these respects," nor any respect, out of the General Conference. All the *authority* to control is in the "full powers."

But what are we to understand by, "*the force of a moral obligation*?" Can the phrase be used without any reference to *conscience*? Would the meaning have been different, if the General Conference had said in so many words to the petitioners: We cannot in conscience permit you, by your representatives, to have seats in the General Conference. So I understood it before I left Pittsburg; so I understand it still. But I neither wrote nor acted accordingly, I merely told my friends on the banks of the Ohio, that this address would prevent me from ever putting my hand to another petition. The task of answering the address would have been undertaken by a more able hand than mine, had not affliction prevented. But so vastly important was the construction which I put upon the address, I thought it best to wait to hear what would be the impression upon the minds of our friends in general. To me the address meant in effect (I could put no other construction upon it) the General Conference is under moral obligation, that is, conscience-bound, to do what is plainly implied in the well known words, "*Being lords over God's heritage.*"

They are bound in conscience to govern local preachers and the laity, without permitting themselves to be authoritatively controlled by them. Now, that the opinion of the friends of representation, in different parts of the continent is known, I find it is, in substance, in accordance with my first impressions, and serves to confirm them. But in thus avowing, according to my understanding of the address of the General Conference, the consciences of its members are enlisted on the side of an absolute, uncontrollable government in their own hands. Do I not slander? Do I not speak evil of these ministers? Not intentionally. But I am determined to act now by this avowal of "*a moral obligation*" on the part of the General Conference, for they do not make it individually, nor is its effects to die with them. The minds and consciences of all over whom the itinerant preachers can have any forming control, will be formed upon the principles avowed in the address. The men who feel the force of a moral obligation, not to permit

their ministrations to be authoritatively controlled by others, will use all the means in their power to transfuse this force of a moral obligation into the breasts of others. And when others are thus conscience bound not to be represented, and so gain authority to control, the system of uncontrollable power, and of non-resistance and passive obedience, will be consummated. And is this "a consummation devoutly to be wished?" Not by me; but devoutly to be deprecated. But it cannot be opposed, it cannot be resisted, it cannot be delayed by argument, by petition, or by any means short of an independent Methodist church organization. The time is now come for me to act, I don't mean to say, for I don't know, that it is so come to others.

I may say that I have paused, that I have delayed for six months, and have not written or acted in reference to the address of the General Conference, to see the more clearly how circumstances would direct me, for as one of the first writers in this controversy, and feeling the consequent responsibility, I thought I had a right to consult circumstances more particularly than some others. And in deep humility, I do take leave to think, that I have been providentially protected and guided, and that I am now providentially directed to become a member and minister of the associated churches. If I should die to-morrow, it would not alter this persuasion of my mind, if these churches remain while I live, few and feeble, or if I live to see them come to nothing, it will not alter this persuasion. As an individual, I must act now, or unsay, in effect, all I have said. The General Conference, in my judgment, have taken new ground, and higher ground than ever. The day of eternity will shew that I have labored intentionally, and used all the means in my power to prevent them from taking this ground; but they have entered upon it with a firm and fearless step. My moral obligation, my conscience must now be put in requisition. Moral obligation has been put in the foreground, it must be met there, if met at all, by its like. Conscience must be opposed to conscience. It now rests upon me with the force of a moral obligation, not to permit myself to be authoritatively controlled by any man, or set of men, "in these respects" or in any religious respect, who tell me to my face, that they will not, cannot in conscience, permit their ministrations to be authoritatively controlled by others (other christians, and christian ministers in their fellowship.)

I set out in this new fellowship, under the force of a moral obligation, never to take, nor to hold, nor to exercise any power without being subject to have my ministrations authoritatively controlled by my brother christians, and brother ministers. As they have the authority, I hope they will not attempt to use force or violence. No, I trust, that in a church, where all will be as the Lord's freemen, I shall not be compelled in my ministrations to act against authority; that my conscience will not be put to this test. And I am sure there was nothing in our petition, like force or violence, or any indication of it, sufficient to call forth the consciences of the members of the General Conference in array against it. I cannot induce my mind to think, that authoritative control was used as synonymous with forcible or violent control.

It must be well known, that I have taken no counsel of my fears, that I have deserted no brother in the day of trouble. And to hasten the present crisis, I had no wish, no ambition. I have never even been in a straight betwixt the two. But the crisis I always foresaw must come, if the principle of representation continued to be resisted. There will, I have no doubt, be other and greater secessions; for, notwithstanding all the church censures and punishments that have been brought to bear upon us, for the violence that was charged upon us, we have been too tame to engage popular feeling. I have studied carefully the successful examples by which men draw away disciples after them, on purpose to know how to avoid them. I knew the materials I had to do with, and I wrote to enlighten them, certainly the slowest of all modes of increasing the number of proselytes to a popular cause.

Your object, you have avowed it a thousand times, is principles, not men. And yet how easy will it be for you to forget to caution yourselves to beware of the counsels of men whose principles differ from yours. The "moral obligation" of the General Conference, is the great point which must hereafter guide itinerant preachers; and it ought to guide us also. Authoritative, that is, legal control, you cannot have unless you have it in General Conference by your representatives. And you now know, those who occupy the seats in that body, are under a moral obligation never to let you set with them. Knowing this, of what account are soft words or hard words, the promises or threatenings, the smiles or the frowns of one, or of one hundred itinerant

preachers, as it regards our high claim to representation. I tell you brethren, if you mean to support the principles of representation, you must have a conscience of your own, and act up to it.

NICHOLAS SNETHEN.

No. 68.

Christian Intelligencer, vol. ii. December 6, 1829, p. 131.

Motives.

A writer in opposition to representation, it seems has implicated our motives. But why should we have any other motives than those which we profess? We have always declared, as we still declare, that our object is representation, and we do not conceal the consequences, viz: that we wish others to have it as well as ourselves. Certainly if it were in our power, we would convince and persuade every member and minister of the old side to adopt our theory, and reduce it to practice. Our motives cannot be questioned, unless our professions of regard for representation are supposed to be hypocritical. And surely those who have suffered themselves to be excluded, and those who have voluntarily withdrawn, have given no proofs of insincerity. We believe that those who are leaving no means unessayed to destroy representation, by destroying us, are very sincere. They would divide us in Jacob, and scatter us in Israel, and leave no two of us together. We therefore oppose motive to motive, and intention to intention. They hate representation, we love it. They oppose it, and we support it. They are sincere; so are we. Our saying and doing are as consistent as theirs; why then question our motives?

But although our motives may be impeached, motives or intentions alone will not ensure our success; nor can we succeed by adopting the means of our opponents. As the friends of representation, we must act so as to gain and secure the confidence of all. Let the question be asked me upon an individual case, what was your motive for acting so or so? My answer would be, to get or keep the confidence of the friends of liberty. As, for instance, when your friends were turned out of the church, why did you withdraw? Because, if I had not, I must have lost the confidence of all parties. Now what was the motive of those who turned my friends out of the church? I believe it was in part, at least, to bring about a loss of confidence, which would certainly

have been effected if none of the friends of representation had withdrawn and associated with them. The result would have been inevitable; and this loss of confidence would have led to universal despair of the cause. Who would ever have dared again to brave itinerant power, in the cause of representation, after being thus taught by example, that they might be suffered to fall alone? We are told that many friends of representation still remain in the church, who think that they can render the cause more service in the church than out of it. I question not their sincerity; but who has confidence in them? It is matter of much surprise to me, to find how little account is made of confidence. A friend of Mr. O'Kelly has, it seems, told the secret, that a breach of confidence among the party, led to all their calamities. It matters not by what process confidence among a new party is made to fail, the consequences will be ruinous to it; for confidence is their only bond; if this fails all fails. When my friends were expelled, the crisis had come, —I must either go with them, or undo all that I ever had done in the cause of representation, and disqualify myself forever to render it any service. Necessity was laid upon me, and I consulted not with flesh and blood. The dilemma was not to be avoided. The question must have been asked, why did you not go with the men who were excluded for publishing your writings? How could I answer? Would it have sufficed to say, I can do more good to the cause by staying where I am! Why, I knew and always did know, that a man can do no good to any cause, when he has lost the confidence of its friends.

Let the opponents of representation question our motives as much as they please; but an impartial and candid public will judge us by our works: they will look for the evidence of our sincerity in our consistency, in our courage, and in our constancy. Behold the rock on which many of the travelling preachers have been wrecked! Behold how they misled others! They are still the friends of liberal principles, and yet they are destined almost daily to shock the public confidence in their own professions. The decree of the power under which they act, is, that the excommunicants and their friends must be put down, in order to put down representation; and they lend the hand. Alas! for these men! can they find what they seek,—consolation in the belief that they are thus rendering a more essential service to the cause? I can only say that I could not. He

who has the confidence of two adverse parties to secure, has a most difficult part to act. It will be well if he do not realize the maxim of "between two stools." I say then to those motive questioners, my motive is to seek and find the confidence of all the true friends of representation. If others shall be successful in an opposite course, it will be well for them. I am fully persuaded I cannot. I have no secret motives, but speak and spare not, whether men will hear or forbear; and wish with all my heart, that a doctrine which I do all I can to make universal, may become so among preachers and people.

The part which some preachers have acted, who were once volunteers in the cause of representation, has staggered many minds exceedingly. I plead the apology of these old friends thus: They did not foresee; they have been led on by degrees, until it has come to this point, that they must go forward, or retrace their steps; and even now they do not feel, what a shock they are giving to public feeling. The power under which they act is as unrelenting as death. Woe to the man who goes not to all its lengths! Many are the painful struggles which those have escaped, who, when the circumstances made the call, ventured all for representation. Truly I envy not my dear old friends, when they turn their backs upon me, and shut their pulpits against me. I should deem it the greatest calamity of my life, if, under the impulse of any party feeling, I should be obliged to do the like to any of them.

O, ye friends of representation, fear not to risk your all for the cause! We rejoice that it fell not to our lot to be expelled, that we might prove to you and to the world, that no shame nor fear could prevent us from stepping forth voluntarily, to bear a part of that immense weight of church reproach which was to devolve upon our expelled friends. We have thus at once challenged confidence, and given an example of it. Our greatest fear now is, that those who remain behind are destined to lose confidence in themselves: their prudence will be so often put to the test, and dictate to them not to speak and to act, that it will be very apt to take on the habit of timidity, and of fear itself. When the fear to act becomes habitual, the power to act is gone, and with it all self-confidence. It is a distressing anticipation, that any of our old co-workers in the cause of liberty, should become the subjects of the fear of man, which bringeth a
snare.

P. P.

No. 69.

Christian Intelligencer, vol. II. January 5, 1830, page 129.

Thoughts on the Moral and Intellectual states of the Supporters of the Principle of Representation.

"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

The opposers of representation fail not to include ambition among the bad qualities of its supporters; but they cannot conceive of their ambition as having any thing great or good in its nature, or its tendency. It is ambition of the worst kind, and of the worst consequences. No pictures of depravity can well be drawn in baser colors, than those in which some of our former friends have painted us, and that in letters written to ourselves alone. The vilest and most ignoble ambition must indeed degrade any heart and mind, by habitual contact. For ambition, under any modification, we aim not to be the advocates. But it is customary with writers to use this word, for the want of a better, perhaps, in reference to lawful or laudable purposes. So a man is considered as ambitious of success, in a good enterprise. The opposers of representation attempt to defeat its friends, and they are ambitious of success.

They feel that they will be ashamed, if they do not succeed. If they do succeed, they must of course presume that the shame will be the lot of their opponents. How then can the friends of representation repress a similar feeling, or kind of ambition. The opposers of representation wage a war of extermination. They hold up the friends of the principle as too bad to live, and as obnoxious to final perdition. Death and destruction are the burden of their daily predictions. They have turned the eyes of the whole world upon us. We have to become a by-word, and a reproach, and an object of hissing. Can we know all this, and feel no ambition? And if ambitious of success under such circumstances, must our ambition be wholly ignoble and debasing? Look you, great and good sirs! what if these ambitious men aspire to conquer you? If they can conceive such an idea, must they not be greater than kings among beggars? Our patriots began by claiming their rights as free men; but they soon found a reward set upon their heads. Did the nations look upon them as scape-gallows? Not so, they became spectators of the

conflict. See how the circumstances combined. Americans contending for their rights, and for their lives, contended as in the presence of all Europe, whose good will was to be secured by their courage. If they were ambitious, could they well avoid becoming so? And would they have found allies if they had been less so? We deny not the charge of ambition now. We know not, it may be, how ambitious we are. Our opponents have compelled us to contend for fame; they have made success essential, not only to our liberty, but to our being; and coupled their defeat to our success. Great is the prize they have set before us. Can we win it and not be great? The little and the paltry objects they accused us of being influenced by in the beginning, if they had any existence, must have given place to considerations of the greatest magnitude. We are preached against. Are we thus beaten? Who is to judge? Those who hear both sides. If they judge that we out-preach our opponents, the victory is ours. How can we hope to out-preach them, if we cultivate nothing great in our hearts or our minds? The true state of the case is this: To say nothing upon the subject of representation, in the abstract, we shall not insult the feelings of any American by attempting to prove to him that an attachment to it is consistent with the greatest attainments in goodness. To say nothing in praise of our own virtue, every true and sincere friend and supporter of the cause of representation, who has been a Methodist, if he has genius, if he has generous qualities of heart, must have them called forth in the present crisis. If there be traitors to the cause among us, if men who do not understand or value their rights, or those who are indeed altogether selfish, and can see nothing beyond their poor, little selves, they must disappear; but all that is excitable by greatness, whether in the heart or mind, may be expected to display itself. We can have no motive to undervalue our opponents, on the supposition that we are ambitious; for the greater they are, the greater will be the glory of our success.

PHILO PISTICUS.

